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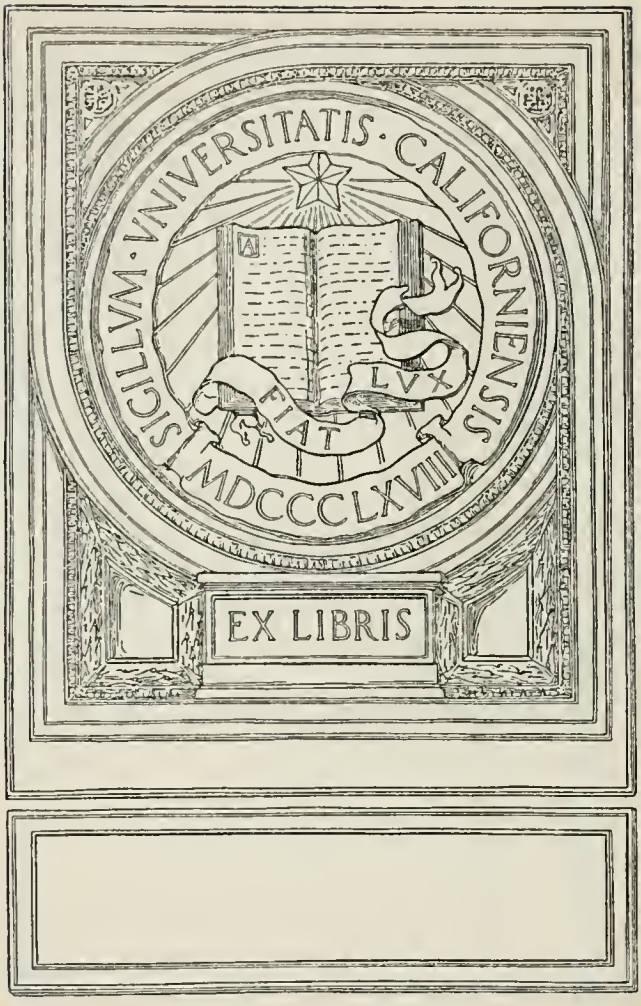
MY DEBUT IN JOURNALISM.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To

Albert B.Chandler, Esq.,

Whose kind letter to the author, when "Oakum Pickings" was published nearly twenty years ago, is still preserved and cherished.

Walter T. Phillips

New York, June 28,1892.

MY DEBUT IN JOURNALISM

AND

OTHER ODD HAPPENINGS.

BY

WALTER P. PHILLIPS.

NEW YORK:
THE INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAM CO.

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1892
MAIN

TO MY GALLANT COMRADES

IN THE RANKS OF

The United Press

THIS BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
My Debut in Journalism,	5
An Agreeable Saunterer,	23
Miss Britton's Romance,	45
An Evening Reverie,	65
Esther Romaine,	79
An Old Man's Exegesis,	111
Agnes Leigh,	121
Stage Coaching,	167
Old George Wentworth,	185

MY DEBUT IN JOURNALISM.

MY DEBUT IN JOURNALISM.

"IF you will come over and see Ferguson right away," wrote my friend, the managing editor of *The Plantation Harbinger*, "I think you can obtain the position of local editor. Charlie Hurd has lit out."

Ferguson was the proprietor of *The Harbinger*, and I was an ambitious telegraph operator eager to enter the journalistic field, so I went in pursuit of him. I met Hurd on my way over, and asked him what was the trouble, and where he was going.

"On the Boston *Globe*," he answered. "Ferguson does not pay his help."

"Why," returned I, "his managing editor, Mr. Pickett, has just written me a note asking me to go and see Ferguson about the situation you have vacated. He said nothing about bad pay, simply stating that you had 'lit out.'"

"Pickett is in the ring," observed Hurd, significantly, and he hastened in the direction of the Boston depot.

It was with my enthusiasm considerably abated that I entered the presence of Mr. Ferguson. I knew him slightly, his rotund form and genial face, in connection with a stub-tailed horse and Concord wagon, being familiar to about every man, woman and child in town. He was a person who never wholly lost his *aplomb* under the most discouraging circumstances, as I afterward learned, and who, under ordinary conditions, was a perfect Chesterfield. It will be a good many years in the future before I shall have forgotten the cordial grasp he gave my hand, and the benignant smile which played upon his lips as he said :

"Mr. Pickett's heart is set upon having you come on our paper as local editor. I have studied with great care such occasional work as you have done for us. It is exceedingly good. I am a man of few words, Mr. Phillips. I like you. I want you to like me. I do business on the square. I will pay you twenty dollars per week, and you get your cash every Saturday." Afterward I learned that Ferguson never read a line in his paper unless his attention was called to something, and he read

it then under protest. I learned a great deal during the next year, but of that hereafter.

"Mr. Hurd said"—

"One moment," interrupted Ferguson, "see you again in a second," and he went to his desk, and making a note for thirty days sent it to the bank. Before I could resume my story about Hurd, Ferguson said :

"I never like to talk about a man behind his back. But here are the facts in a nutshell : Mr. Hurd is a good fellow, sharp writer and all that, but he is extravagant. He has drawn his salary in advance ever since he came here. Yesterday he wanted me to advance him a hundred dollars. I declined, and he is gone, thank fortune ! He is a good paymaster who pays when the work is done. I do that. I am willing to pay one or two weeks' salary in advance, but I can't furnish money to everybody who comes along, in quantities to suit—like to accommodate, you know, but it isn't business, and I am not in a position to do it without cramping myself. Another thing," he went on glibly, "Hurd's wife is afraid of thunder and light-

ning, and every time a shower comes along, off he goes home—no matter if it's only eight o'clock. Now, the local editor of a morning paper can't go home at eight o'clock in the evening and do justice to the city department. I tolerated this because I wished the man well, but you know how 'tis yourself. There comes a straw one day that breaks the camel's back, and Hurd's constant hypothecation of his salary and his attempts to browbeat me into lending him large sums have done the business for him."

After a great number of compliments on my lively way of writing, and no end of assurances that if a man did not "impose on him unreasonably it was all right," I left the mighty presence with a very high regard for Ferguson, and a very seriously changed heart toward my avaricious predecessor. And if Hurd's rapacity in seeking to do a sort of free banking with his employer hadn't settled him in my estimation, his habit of going home "in the midst of a murder," as Ferguson said, "if a thunderstorm came up," would have done the business for him of itself. I had engaged

myself for one year at twenty dollars per week, and began work the next day. As I had only worked half a week when pay day came I thought it wiser to let the amount lie until the next Saturday than to bother Ferguson about half a week's pay, and I did so. As my hours were from seven P.M. to two or three A.M., and as Ferguson seldom, if ever, visited the editorial rooms at night, I did not see him from one week to the other. Occasionally I visited the counting-room to find it in charge of a supremely saucy boy, who sat on a high stool and shrilly whistled, and who invariably answered the question, "When will Ferguson be in?" with a grunt, which the practiced ear recognized as "Give it up." But though I saw him not, Ferguson sent me numerous kind messages during the week, and finally, at the bottom of one of his pleasant notes, he wrote: "Didn't see you Saturday; money waiting for you." On receipt of that missive so great was my confidence in his integrity I would have lent Ferguson a thousand dollars had he asked for it and I could have raised it. When Saturday arrived I went to the counting-

room and ran upstairs with a light step. Ferguson was not in, and several persons with anxious faces were in waiting. To my question as to when Mr. Ferguson would be in, the shrill whistler grunted as usual, and as I seemed to be at a loss what to say, he volunteered the remark :

"Don't pay off till two o'clock."

The city clock struck eleven as I passed downstairs and out upon the busy street. I felt very sure about Ferguson, but I had my doubts about the boy, Brooks. He was becoming a thorn in my side with his stereotyped "Give it up," and his disturbing remarks. I was positive he misrepresented Mr. Ferguson, and took advantage of his absence to snub and render uncomfortable not only employees but also patrons of the paper. I determined to speak to Mr. Ferguson about him and have him admonished—annihilated, if possible.

I returned to the office at five minutes past two o'clock to find the little counting-room crowded with compositors, reporters, pressmen, editors, route-boys, bootblacks, and a great many others. As I peered over the sea of shoulders my eyes

caught those of Ferguson, and he shouted, "Make room there for Mr. Phillips." As I approached the desk Ferguson dipped a pen, put his chubby finger against an entry in a large book where he wished me to sign, and, before I had scarcely finished my name, he placed thirty dollars before me. I stepped aside to make room for Dr. Rose, our foreman, who had just come in, but I did not retire, as I wished to consult Ferguson about several matters which struck me as being of vital importance to *The Harbinger's* welfare. As I stood waiting I observed that Dr. Rose's youthful face wore an expression much graver than I had ever seen there before. I was surprised that no pen was dipped for him to sign with, and that Ferguson requested no one to "Make room for Dr. Rose." The Doctor was admitted behind the counter after a few seconds, and Ferguson whispered with him earnestly. Then a ten-dollar note was handed to him, and he walked out looking very severe. I saw it all. Dr. Rose had been drawing his salary in advance, and Ferguson would only be imposed upon within reasonable bounds. He had given

the Doctor ten dollars, which was generous under the circumstances. My heart warmed toward him for his liberality. Next came Henry Ladd, the telegraph editor.

"What can I do for you, Henry?" inquired Ferguson.

"Let me have twenty," said Ladd; "rent due."

"Sorry, but I can't do it, Henry," returned Ferguson, in the blandest tones imaginable. "Here," he added, "are two dollars in pennies. Now git!" I had no doubt that Ladd had overdrawn *his* salary by several hundred dollars, and his assurance in coming to ask for money at all surprised and pained me.

The next Saturday Mr. Ferguson paid me with less alacrity, and I noticed that he addressed me by my given name. A week later he said: "Wally, old boy, here's fifteen dollars for you, can't make change any nearer. Hand you the other five on Monday," and upon my third appearance he simply handed me a ten-dollar note, with the observation, "Here you go, Phil; hang up the other ten with that five I owe you on last week."

"But what kind of a way to do business is this?" I asked.

"Oh, run along, sonny," said Ferguson, with a smile; "no time to 'yawp' on the day preceding the peaceful Sabbath. Come in any day but Saturday, and we will talk matters up."

I walked out considerably worried and cast down. "Come in any day but Saturday," was refreshing in the extreme. As if I hadn't visited his office day after day to talk about the feasibility of adding another reporter to our force, and been met by that incorrigible whistler, whose "Give it up" had become a perfect nightmare. Mr. Ferguson was seldom in, though I found, during my periods of watching and waiting, that very few men were in greater demand.

On making my fifth appearance, as I reached for a pen, my employer said:

"You needn't sign that book, Phil."

"Not sign!" I ejaculated, thoroughly nonplused.

"No; money about all gone. Have to pay the compositors, or they won't go to work Sunday

night—have no paper Monday. You and Ladd, and Rose and Bowers and Bishop, get three dollars apiece to-day, and that settles your hash. Members of the intellectual department are supposed to work for fame, not money."

He handed me three dollars, and inquired if I would like to go to the Theodore Thomas concert that evening. Replying in the affirmative, he passed me two complimentary tickets, and dashed downstairs. A moment later he was gathering up the reins, which had fallen under the feet of the stub-tailed horse, and I sat watching him as one in a trance.

"Brooks! Brooks!" called Ferguson.

Brooks made a break in the tune he had been whistling ever since I had known him, and going to the window, responded, "Aye, Aye."

"Charge Phillips with six dollars—three cash, and three for those Thomas concert tickets," said Ferguson, and then he drove away.

To say that I was enraged, as I tore up the street, but feebly expresses the intemperate frame of mind in which I found myself after all this. I

soon met Rose and Ladd, and began my tale of woe. They stopped me at once, and said:

"So he's landed *you*, too, eh? Give us your hand."

I felt that congratulations were by no means in order, but I mechanically put forth my hand, and both shook it warmly. They knew that I had "joined the band of hope."

I staid on *The Harbinger* as "local," political writer, managing editor, and what not for two years, and with the exception of such payments as I have mentioned, my cash receipts from Ferguson's treasury were slim indeed. Why I remained I cannot explain. Pickett, who once visited Ferguson with the determination of squeezing fifty dollars out of him, was assuaged with an "order" for a grindstone; but, in the face of asking for money and receiving a stone, Pickett still stuck to the paper and "salivated the Republican Party," as he expressed it, months and months after his labor had ceased to bring shekels. Rose and Ladd, the ancient and precise ship-news reporter, Mr. Tilley, and many others, were doing the same thing, and

wondering at it. There was something in the atmosphere of *The Harbinger* office which had a mollifying effect on everybody who entered Ferguson's service, and at the end of two months I found myself very well contented with my lot, a popular man around town, and the possessor of more furniture, curtains, cooking stoves, etc., which I had taken from Ferguson or purchased on his "orders" than I knew what to do with. When I had been with him six months I was one day in sore need of money, and sought his office. Luckily, I found him in, and I stated my case with a degree of fluency that ought to have moved him. But it didn't. He listened patiently until I had closed, and then replied:

"Haven't a dollar; but," pointing to a corner, "there are two hundred and fifty feet of galvanized iron clothes-line that I took on an advertisement, which I will sell you cheap."

I retired heart-broken.

Mr. Ferguson was a man of "orders." There was "nothing under the canopy, from a rotten apple to a locomotive," as he phrased it, which he

could not furnish on call or give an "order" for. "I get a man to advertise in *The Harbinger*, as a general thing," he explained, "on the strength of my offering to take my pay out in trade. Then I send you, or Ladd, or Rose, or Bowers, and buy about fifty dollars' worth of truck, and I keep on buying so that I am always ahead of that man. He wants to take his advertisement out at the end of three months but he cannot do it, because I am owing him. Had men in this paper several years in just that way. Once in a while a man gets mad, and I have to square up with him in cash, and let him take his advertisement out, but that doesn't often happen."

It happened sometimes, however, when I was present, and it was then that Ferguson's abilities shone resplendent. The reader must have surmised that Ferguson was always short of ready money. He was. So when one of these troublesome advertisers came along and demanded a settlement, Ferguson would meet him something as follows:

"I owe you a balance of $79.85. I have no

money, but I'll give you my note for thirty days. Put it in your bank, get her discounted, and I'll pay the discount. Just as good as cash."

To this the party of the other side would assent, and Ferguson would draw up a note in very pretty shape, and bringing it over would say:

"I have made this note for $150, because I make all my notes for a round sum. You get it discounted, and send me your check for the balance. Here, Brooks, go down with Mr. Blank and bring back a check." And, before the astonished recipient of the note could recover his equipoise, Ferguson would have bowed him out of the room.

Sometimes the men who accepted these promises to pay, and gave checks which could be used immediately, found themselves in a rather embarrassed situation when the notes matured. Ferguson was one of those men who imagined that it added dignity and character to a promissory note to let it go to protest. Thus it would often happen that, after the disaffected advertiser had enjoyed the felicity of paying Ferguson's note, and had

visited the whistler fifteen or twenty times without even getting sight of the object of his search, I would receive a letter from Ferguson instructing me to write a third of a column notice puffing the business of the man to whom the note had been given. When this appeared, Ferguson would drive to the store of the whilom customer, and, laying *The Harbinger* before him, would say:

"It is the biggest kind of a shame that I haven't taken up that note, but I have not had the money. I haven't it now; but if it would give you any satisfaction to kick me, you are at liberty to do it"—and he would present himself for chastisement.

I believe, however, that he was never kicked. After this, the editorial notice, which I had written the night before, would be read as Ferguson's own production, and in nine cases out of ten that $150 would be taken out in advertising—and the men thus won over never deserted him. They had met the enemy, and they were his.

Many years have passed since I wrote my last line for *The Harbinger*, but sometimes, sitting in the twilight, the remembrance of those old days

comes back with such startling force that it seems as if the atmosphere of *The Harbinger's* dingy editorial room was still around me, and I half imagine I see Arthur Bowers, Dr. Rose, Pickett, and all the others, filing up the narrow stairway, thankful for such small favors as the iconoclastic and persuasive Ferguson doles out to them. I do not forget that above the dust of the quaintly original Pickett the springtide winds are sighing mournfully, and that the correct and genial Tilley sleeps the deep slumber from which there is no earthly awakening. I know, moreover, that the others are widely scattered; that the thundering press, whose clangor was as music to my youthful ears, is stilled forever, and that *The Harbinger's* precarious existence is ended. Still, I remember it kindly; for with its life are associated some of the pleasantest episodes in mine. And Ferguson? In the grand cavalcade of life-insurance canvassers he has taken a prominent place. Writing me recently, he said:

"At present I am working and talking that mankind in general may achieve for itself a grand beneficent destiny, by providing for its widows and orphans."

AN AGREEABLE SAUNTERER.

AN AGREEABLE SAUNTERER.

JAMES DULIN, practical printer and cosmopolitan, was a type of a class. I speak of him in the past tense, because the scenes which knew him once know him no more; and it is almost certain that his wanderings are over, and in some quiet nook, lying between the Gulf Stream and the golden sands of the Pacific, his peaceful dust reposes. I trust that fate dealt kindly with him and closed his cheerful being in no unfavored spot, where the winter winds sweep mournfully above the dead. Rather let me indulge the sweet belief that he fell asleep in some genial clime, where the long grass growing above him, is stirred only by kindly breezes, and where the flowers exhale their fragrance from June to June.

My acquaintance with Dulin began in Providence a few years after the close of the great civil conflict —probably in 1870. I was, at the time, the hopeful editor of a struggling daily newspaper which has since succumbed to the inevitable, after a praise-

worthy but futile attempt to convince the Democracy of Rhode Island that it was worthy of encouragement and support. The portly and punctilious ship news reporter, Mr. Tilley, complained to me one afternoon that the regular marine news compositor was absent on one of his periodical enterprises, the objective point of which was to demonstrate, to his own satisfaction, that sorrow may be effectually buried by recourse to the flowing bowl. The complainant added that "something must be done," as the new incumbent was making the ship news simply ridiculous by his mischievous blunders in reading copy. Mr. Tilley then proceeded to descant on the plainness of his manuscript, and appealed to me to corroborate his claim that his handwriting was as legible as reprint. I assented to the proposition, but with a colossal mental reservation, for Mr. Tilley usually wrote with a dull-pointed lead pencil about half an inch in length, and his writing bore about the same relation to penmanship that the pot-hooks and trammels used by the shorthand reporters of old bear to the modern and thoroughly perfected system of

phonography. But feeling sorry for the genial and kindly soul who had come to me for sympathy, I volunteered to go upstairs and see if some improvement could not be had. This proposal was rather impatiently received, Mr. Tilley ejaculating sharply, "'You can't do anything with him. He wont say anything but 'Kayrect.' I wrote yesterday that the schooner Jane Montgomery had arrived with three hundred carboys for Chambers & Calder. It was printed three hundred cabbages. Everybody is laughing at me. It is shameful that after forty years' experience as a marine reporter I should fall into the clutches of an irresponsible tramp printer and be made to arrive cabbages for one of the largest drug houses in this section."

By this time the old gentleman was walking up and down the room greatly excited.

"'And when I went to him and remonstrated," cried Mr. Tilley, "what does the loafer do but wink at me! Yes, sir, he winked at me and said: 'Don't distress yourself, uncle; no one ever reads the ship news slop. Such skulch is printed, when used

at all, to flatter the vanity of old fossils like you who can't do anything else but spy out vessels' names through a glass. You don't seem to understand it; the publisher has no real need for you; he just lets you fool with the ship news rather than hurt your feelings by putting you on a pension. If I were running this paper I would have put you on the retired list as early as 1847.' Heavens and earth! I let into him after that speech," concluded the speaker, whose face now rivaled the hue of a well boiled lobster.

"And he promised to be more careful in the future?" I inquired.

"Careful! not he. He just winked at me again —a plague on his familiar winking—and said, 'Kayrect.'" With this Mr. Tilley seized his spy-glass and notebook, and passed out, slamming the door after him.

When I had once more demolished the pretensions of the Republican party in a column article, and had produced accompanying paragraphs and political notes to fill the regular amount of space devoted to my use, I took my copy and climbed a

pair of untidy stairs leading to the composing room.

"Who is slug nine while Wilcox is absent?" I inquired, addressing collectively the dozen or fifteen men who had been throwing in their cases, and who were waiting for the copy which I held in my hand. A companionable looking man of about thirty years, in broken boots, a frilled shirt and a vest and pantaloons which proclaimed as distinctly as tongueless clothes could speak that they were originally intended to adorn a differently proportioned person than their present wearer, stepped forward and said pleasantly: "I am slug nine—James Dulin; I've got a working card, and I'm in a good standing with the Union."

"In better standing with the Union than with Mr. Tilley, perhaps," I said, smiling. Dulin had taken the first page of manuscript and had gone to his case while I was speaking. I followed him.

"The fact is," he said, good naturedly, and with an inoffensive degree of freedom which indicated that in his opinion, at least, there could not possibly be any lack of sympathy between gentle-

men like him and me, "the fact is the old party with the telescope and that stub-toed lead pencil doesn't turn out just the stuff for a stranger to tackle. I'm all right on 'straight matter' like this truck of yours. If it were not good manuscript—which it is—I would still be all right. But old Carboy is a tough citizen as a quill driver, I can tell you. He came up here when I was new and nervous, talking about those cabbages, and he wasn't very choice in his language. I wished to respect his age and said nothing until he told me he was a 'comp.' That pricked my professional pride, and I lost my temper. Bless his crabbed old soul, he couldn't stick type in these days ; and I told him so. I reckon he doesn't like me pretty well from what he said," Dulin added, thoughtfully, "but I can't help it. The old and new do not assimilate, you know. He thinks I am too young for the responsible task of setting his matter; while in my judgment he should have been planted twenty years ago. He doesn't seem to see it; but, really, Methuselahs are not in fashion in this nineteenth century. It is too pro-

gressive an age to admit of our encouraging the veteran to any great extent. In fact, the veteran, as has been remarked before, is inclined to lag reluctant on the stage without any special inducements."

After a very pleasant talk, in the course of which I cautioned Dulin against making any further errors in Mr. Tilley's reports of the same absurd character as the one which had annoyed the old gentleman so greatly, I left the room. As I passed into the hall I heard Dulin ejaculate with a somewhat irrevelant prefix that he "couldn't set type on an empty stomach." One of the other compositors dropped his stick in astonishment and replied :

"Why ! I lent you some money to get breakfast with, didn't I ?"

"Yes," said Dulin, as he went to the "galley" and emptied a stickful of matter, before any of his companions had set half as much, "yes, you lent me money. It was very kind of you, too, Eben ; but an empty 'comp' can't spread himself on fifteen cents."

"But it was half a dollar I gave you," pursued Eben.

"Kayrect," responded Dulin, "but I paid out thirty-five cents of it for getting my moustache painted."

I then noticed for the first time, as Dulin returned to his case and transferred the type to his stick with marvelous rapidity, that his moustache had indeed just received an application which gave it the appearance of a very inky tooth brush. This exhibition of vulgar taste on Dulin's part hurt my feelings; but when the "proofs" came down to the editorial-room that night for correction, and never an error, typographical or otherwise, discovered itself under slug nine, I yielded him his full due of admiration, and went home well fortified in my belief that he was a real acquisition to the paper, and half convinced that if a man wished to dye his subnasal appendage and make himself ridiculous, it was nobody's business but his own.

Dulin made his reputation very rapidly, and at the end of a month, having made "large bills," he indulged his taste for fashionable attire by giving

his order to the leading tailor for "a complete outfit," as he expressed it. A few weeks later he left town. Meeting him on the street and hearing of his determination to take the train for New York that evening, I accompanied him to the station. As the train was about to start he quietly observed :

"I heard what you said about it. It did sort of size my intellect ; but, somehow, it never struck me that way before. If you ever see me again it will show up straw color as nature made it. We learn mighty slowly, particularly in these matters of taste, old man; and I've never had so much of a chance as some men to ——"

The train moved off, thus abbreviating his discourse as quoted above, and leaving me, blushing and embarrassed, to learn that anything I had said of his inclination to avail himself of the friendly offices of nitrate of silver had reached his ears.

The delicate health of *The Plantation Harbinger*— it was always in pecuniary distress—together with a longing to display my energy and journalistic blandishments in a wider field, ultimately persuaded

me to seek my fortune in New York. I met Dulin occasionally in Printing House Square, and came to learn by degrees that the Dulin of my imagination and the real Dulin possessed remarkable points of difference. The discovery made me melancholy at first—it is very saddening to see our idols dashed before our very eyes. But there was no escape for me ; and little by little I learned Dulin's history and some of his ways, and became reconciled to the inevitable. It appeared that notwithstanding he was an expert compositor and had performed splendid service on many occasions when the emergency of the moment demanded it, he very rarely soiled his fingers by bringing them in contact with prosaic type. I was told that he was a telegraph operator as well as a compositor, and that his crowning glory was one of the sweetest tenor voices to be heard this side of Italy. It transpired that he relied upon his telegraphic relations for the procurement of railroad passes from time to time ; upon his skill as a printer to obtain what money was necessary to meet his pressing wants ; and upon his ability to tell an amusing story or sing

a song to advance his social interests. He was well groomed and characterized by an air of genteel prosperity. Having incidentally told me a month after my arrival that he was looking for a boarding place, I invited him to share my own room and take his meals with me until he could make some better arrangement. He cordially adopted my suggestion and made me a longer visit than I had expected he would. But he was always cheerful and deferential and his society was rather pleasant and desirable, although the discharge of my indebtedness, incurred on his account, added to my own expenses, made sad havoc with my slender income. He finally gathered his impedimenta together one morning, and simply saying, "*Au revoir*, if I shouldn't come back again," passed out-of-doors softly whistling an air from "Mignon." That was the last I saw of him for two years. I renewed my acquaintance with him as he stepped out of a coupé in front of the Hoffman House one September morning. He insisted that I should breakfast with him. We talked upon every conceivable subject; and he casually mentioned as we

separated, that he had just returned from Havana, where he had been the guest of a wealthy New York merchant. I never saw him afterward, though for some years later I heard of him at intervals—sometimes in one locality and again in another—always well fed, fairly clothed, and invariably popular.

When Dulin told me he had been the guest of a generous host in Havana I was not surprised, for it was as the honored guest of somebody or other that he generally figured. In his day he had tarried for indefinite periods beneath the hospitable roofs of reporters, city editors, publishers, telegraph superintendents, railroad magnates and their subordinates. He had an especial fondness for railroad and steamboat people; and in his latter days, when "passes" were difficult to get he continued his travels just the same, depending upon his linguistic accomplishments to remove the obstacles to riding free which lie in the way of ordinary mortals. Once in a long time a newly appointed conductor would compel him to leave the train; but he boarded the next one that came along, and improved the time placed at his disposal, by these enforced delays, by

a tour of the town if he happened to debark at a metropolis, or by going out into the fields and watching the flight of the birds, noting the methods of the husbandman or listening to the hum of the bees, if it were his good fortune to be stranded at a way station.

But in spite of his tendency to visit, Dulin rarely, if ever, wore his welcome entirely out. He seemed to know by intuition when the pleasure his presence gave was waning, and at the proper moment he departed. Unless he had been invited elsewhere, he would repair to some democratic resort of entertainment where the admission and music were free and where the beverages were dispensed at nominal prices. Here, assuming an attitude of respectful attention, he would await with stoical patience the rosy opportunity which never failed to come. If he were disappointed on the first night he would go again, and ultimately the hour arrived when the tenor of the occasion was indisposed or inebriated, and the cry would be raised, "We must have a song! Who can sing a song?" Rising modestly, Dulin would say

in an unobtrusive way, that his voice was husky from long disuse; that the words of many of the songs he had once known had escaped his memory; but that, if it were agreeable, he would try and sing "I Would I Were a Bird."

His vocal performances never failed to elicit invitations to eat and drink, and then, warmed by a moderate quantity of stimulant and reinforced by a larger amount of digestible food than had surprised his inner man since his departure from the gates of his most recent entertainer, he would sing, "Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming," "Annie Laurie," and other ensnaring ballads. And he sang in tones so sympathetic and with an art so utterly devoid of art that he brought tears to his hearers' eyes, and invariably attracted to his side some impressionable fellow-being who, for the nonce, had forgotten the price of pork or of candles, and was giving his soul a holiday by seeking the scenes where beer and song held sway. These appreciative and unsophisticated sons of trade, who seldom visited the halls of jollity and wassail, and to whom men of Dulin's sort were as a revela-

tion, were his natural victims. "You have a splendid voice, sir," "That was a touching song, young man," and similar observations were cues for which Dulin was ever watchful. He never took the initiative, but waited with a degree of reticence, almost touching, for overtures from those whom he had mentally selected as a means to his future aggrandizement. Winning in manner, deferential and responsive, he seldom failed to become the guest of whomsoever, entertaining the opinion that his voice was good, was indiscreet enough to mention it.

To an acquaintance who had taken a position as station agent and telegraph operator on the Union Pacific Railroad, Dulin once wrote as follows :

"My Dear Proctor—My luck has changed again ; my star is dim and I am going West. I am not in funds, but I hope to close the weary expanse lying between us in the course of the next twenty days. The itinerant telegraphers have of late been showing a preference for the turnpike, and they give sombre accounts of the methods

which the modern conductor is developing in the absence of transportation papers. But I fancy the conductor's heart is as green as ever, and has only taken on a veneering of brusqueness, so to speak, in pretended recognition of the prevailing tendency, on the part of his superior officers, to adopt a parsimonious and grinding policy toward the public, looking to an increased return for money invested and the augmentation of railroad power. In any event, I have no dreams of pedestrianic honors as an outcome of my contemplated pilgrimage toward the setting sun. Humanity is all of one clay—only the outward limbs and flourishes are variant. Once we reach a man's core all is won; and the conductor is no exception to this universal rule. In my occasional ramblings from New York to the Pacific coast, and from Montreal to Galveston, the average conductor has proven to my satisfaction that he is a credit to humanity; and in thrusting myself upon his attention now I trust, by tarrying over a train now and again at points where the attractions of the town or the beauty of the landscape merit the attention of an indolent tourist, to grasp your cordial hand about the seventh proximo. Across the yawning chasm of space which lies between us—two thousand three hundred

miles, according to 'Rand McNally'—I send my greeting. I promise myself great pleasure during the week I hope to pass with you before leaving for the remoter West. God bless you, my boy, and if you ever pray, don't fail to remember in your devotion, that I have undertaken a long journey and that a prayer or two may help to pull me through on time."

Fifteen days after the receipt of Dulin's letter, and somewhat to his friend's surprise, he stepped gaily from a westward bound train at Bridger ; and after making a ten days' stop, he proceeded onward to Virginia City, to take up the long dropped threads of an acquaintance with Dan de Quille, and test the quality of that gentleman's hospitality. During his stay at Bridger he feasted royally on canned oysters and other delicacies suited to his cultivated tastes. He was always entertaining and his society was much sought. His bill amounted to thirty-eight dollars, but it was cheerfully paid by his entertainer, and while his departure was not regretted, his friend would not have hastened it by an hour if he could. Indeed, so nicely did Dulin

balance everything that his arrivals and departures seemed to be in accordance with the eternal fitness of things; and no one ever seemed to regret anything which happened on his account.

I have been impelled to write this desultory paper by accidentally coming upon a bright bit of humorous writing, by a Western philosopher, affecting the proposition which has so long gone unchallenged, viz.: "The world owes me a living." This writer says: "The world may owe you a living, son, if you can get it. But if you are not spry, the world doesn't care much whether you get it or not. The world got along, son, very well before you came into it; and it will continue to whirl on its axis when you are gone." This is sound doctrine; it is a sensible every-day philosophy, which can be safely followed by ordinary travelers along life's great highway; and I subscribe to it unhesitatingly and with all my heart. But what, I wonder, would James Dulin have thought of it? What would those who belong to the class of which he was a type say to such simple teachings?

I can easily imagine the scorn with which Dulin would have regarded such an assumption. And when I remember his successful pursuit of what he conceived to be the highest order of happiness, I am inclined to doubt the truth of his own proposition that "humanity is all of one clay." Perhaps, just as there are religious natures so peculiarly constructed as forms to despise, creeds to distrust, pretensions to deride, there are men possessed of mental organizations differing so radically from the general one that they work out their individual destinies by a violation of those moral laws and conceded principles through an observance of which the majority attain happiness, prosperity and honor. Dulin achieved those ends, undoubtedly, by his own unorthodox means ; for with him it was happiness to be a transient guest, prosperity to travel across the Continent without the formality of purchasing a ticket, and honor of the superbest quality to resemble the lilies which neither toil nor spin.

MISS BRITTON'S ROMANCE.

MISS BRITTON'S ROMANCE.

"I AM not willing to accept so small a royalty on the sales of the etching and I will withdraw the plate, if you please. You'll find it entered up against my own name—King, *Herkimer* King—and not against my *nom de guerre.*"

The person addressed was a clerk in one of the New York publishing houses, and after referring to a record book he produced, from among many parcels, a package which he handed to the first speaker. I had come into the room just as Mr. King had spoken the words quoted above. I had heard his name before and was not surprised that he should bestow a look of intelligence upon me. He made an almost imperceptible halt near the door and I imagined he faintly nodded, but he shot out of the office without speaking.

Herkimer King! I hadn't thought of him in an age. I am rather loth to count up the number of years ago it was that I formed King's acquaintance

up among the white hills of New Hampshire. I was sitting on the piazza of the Profile House one afternoon when the stage arrived from the Crawford House. King and his newly-made wife, accompanied by a middle-aged lady, were among the passengers. Mrs. King was one of the prettiest women I had ever seen, but impressionable as I was in those remote days, I was much more interested in the middle-aged lady than in her youthful companion. The elder lady's face was one of the most refined I had ever beheld, and she had the graceful carriage, the dignified poise of head and the general air which those who have not been abroad are wont to associate with queens.

In the evening King came to me for a bit of fire for his cigar as I was promenading up and down the piazza, and we were soon chatting together familiarly. In the course of conversation I inquired about the lady who accompanied him. He made some evasive answer and began to sing softly to himself. The burden of his song, I remember, referred to the palpable advantages of a starry night for a ramble. Presently he said :

"Quite a singular story associated with that lady. I have known her a long, long time. Perhaps I can interest you by relating the salient features of what I call 'her romance.'"

I said, promptly, that I had no doubt he could and begged him to proceed. His narrative ran as follows:

"Her name is Edith Britton. She is no longer young, as you saw, but she will always be attractive. Time was, too, when she was pretty enough, as many of the Yale alumni can bear sorrowful testimony. I was too young when I first met her to be justified in aspiring to share her winning smile with my full grown associates, but I knew that her ways were sunny and her whole bearing that of a thorough lady. In those days she was a medium-sized, brown-haired, rosy-cheeked maiden, with graceful manners, a finished education, and her voice was a sort of 'vocal velvet.' She attracted suitors without number, and among those who worshiped at her shrine in those ante-war days were two students who have since become eminent lawyers, one who has developed into a railroad

president, another who now shares with only one man the honor of being the leading journalist of the West, while still others are occupying positions of more or less importance in mercantile pursuits, medicine and the law. It was naturally discouraging to be rejected, but none of them, I believe, ever cherished a moment's resentment when each, in his turn, was denied a closer companionship than that of friend, and Harry Perkins, a passenger-train conductor, was accepted as the man of men and it was settled that Miss Britton should become Mrs. Perkins.

"As the word is usually understood, Perkins was one of the most patriotic of men. Without possessing any particularly noble traits of character or any unusual mental gifts or acquirements, he had a blind confidence in the greatness of the United States, and an almost idolatrous faith in the puissance of the American eagle, while to him the American flag meant more than any other symbol upon which his eyes had ever rested. As would logically follow, therefore, when hostilities between the Government and the South were avowed and

Anderson's brave little band in Charleston harbor were assailed by Confederate guns, the smouldering enthusiasm in Harry Perkins' bosom burst into flame, and dropping every pursuit, including that of love making, in which he was largely engaged just then, he donned the blue and went marching southward to martial measure. We heard but little from him after he went away, and though it was generally admitted that Miss Britton was in regular receipt of letters from her soldier lover, it was occasionally hinted that the epistolary blandishments of Private Perkins, of which something had been known in the bud, had not developed into perfect flower as a result of his association with the implements of war and the carnage of sanguinary strife.

"My old associates often used to discuss Perkins. They were anxious to discover what there was about the fellow that should have secured him favor with a woman who had discouraged so many handsomer, cleverer and finer grained men than he. As I neared my majority and an incipient moustache began to disfigure my upper lip, I sometimes

took a modest part in these debates. But that was a long time ago. I have grown wiser since. No sensible man, I fancy, ever bothers his head any more endeavoring to analyze the elusive causes underlying the preferences of women. I can answer for one who does not, at all events, for I am inclined to class their preferences with their hates and quarrels, of which the astute Henry Clay once said, shaking his head helplessly: 'They are like the hates and quarrels of the Medes and Persians—they admit of neither inquiry nor explanation.'

"Years passed by, and the unfortunate war, which had carried such cruel havoc to heart and purse, both North and South, had terminated. On every hand bells were ringing, and up from throats, irrespective of their owners' political predilections, went joyous cheers for the great captain who had smoothed war's wrinkled front by his negotiations at Appomattox. Again sweet peace reigned in our land, and all was hope and thanksgiving everywhere. Each and every north-bound train brought back those of our brave, battered boys who had escaped

death by bullet and disease, while the dismembered ranks of the Confederates were broken, and the sturdy fellows who had fought for a principle they conceived to be right sought their dismantled homes. But the tidal wave flowing northward did not restore Perkins to the eager arms of his affianced wife. And yet sufficient evidence of his safe delivery from the crucible of battle reached Miss Britton's ears to satisfy her that he still lived. Meantime she had passed beyond the pale of youth and was entering upon the epoch of mature spinsterhood. The crimson in her cheeks began to fade, the gloss went gradually but surely from her beautifully abundant hair, and perchance a reminder that life was transitory—a reminder in the shape of a silvery thread—came, now and again, and shone among her luxuriant tresses.

"About this time Jack Dunwoody, one of her old Yale lovers, who had married in the South during the war, and who had meantime been widowed, renewed his suit, but without success. He made me his confidant and we discussed Miss Britton's prolonged engagement the better part of the night.

She had made her choice, Jack contended, and it would be her final one. Deserving or undeserving as Perkins might have been, Miss Britton had given him her heart, and while it was plainly doubtful if he ever returned to claim the treasure which had awaited him through all the years, Dunwoody was satisfied that no one else would ever fill the place in her heart where Perkins, in fact, or his memory, the idea, was imperishably enshrined. I do not altogether indorse Jack's reasoning, and of course I am not responsible for it. His views are peculiar, and he discussed the subject something after this fashion :

"'I sometimes think a woman enjoys the "might have been" more than she does the bright reality. To her everything is dearest which is tinged with sadness. Her favorite poem is pretty sure to be "Lucille," her choice in music most certainly includes Gottschalk's "Last Hope," and the songs which she adores are "When the Flowing Tide Comes In," if she chances to like Millard ; "Will He Come ?" if Sullivan be her preference, or "Three Fishers Went Sailing Out into the West,"

if she has a fondness for Charles Kingsley. The frame of mind which we regard as melancholy and unfortunate is, perhaps, a woman's most ecstatic condition. She is loyal by nature, and if opportunity has enabled her to show her fealty to a person or an idea, then is she happy. If, in addition, there is a dash of mystery thrown in as part and parcel of her life and love, her imagination, ever active and alert, fills in the lapses left by actualities, and a series of alluring memories, impressions, hopes and aspirations—all of them mere intangibilities—are the result. Man cannot have his life reduced to a point where it is too definite to suit him. He would be glad to know in advance just what was in store for him. Not so a woman—any definite plan of life would bore her to death. And we make the mistake, I think, of assuming that a man who can make plain sailing for the wife of his bosom, and who can do the most toward reducing life's problem to an exact science, enters the list of suitors well equipped for the contest. No, my dear Herkimer, that isn't the way to win. Devotion in exaggeration, neglect by wholesale,

more or less mystery, and our adorable sister can imagine things as beautiful and unmeaning as the frost etchings on yonder window pane, and these she undoubtedly prefers to such accurate and prosaic pictures as are the outcome of a union with a man of regular habits, a good digestion and a logical mind.'"

"Poor Jack," said King, tenderly, "he was very funny at times. And yet we won't quarrel—in fact we can't—with his odd notions, for it must be remembered that he had twice received the mitten. You remember what Holmes says—that when the tide is very low it is possible to decipher the inscriptions on the Dighton rocks. Well, the tide was very low with Jack on that gusty winter's evening when he told me of his love and his repeated rejections, and essayed to analyze the feminine mind. The scars upon his heart, which he then revealed, are not visible, I assure you, when the stream is full and flows freely to the sea."

At this point King became silent for a moment. Then he hummed in a rich mellow baritone a few bars of "Sweet Flower, Impart." Resuming his narrative, shortly, he concluded thus :

"Last Christmas afternoon there was a great merrymaking at 'Squire Britton's house in the outskirts of New Haven. There were present sons, daughters, nephews and nieces, with their collective progeny. The day was glorious; 'the Christmas sun was shining and the Christmas bells were ringing far and near.' About four o'clock Miss Britton was presiding over a rehearsal in a large front room upstairs. A series of charades were contemplated for the evening and she was putting the children through their final paces preparatory to their appearance at night. One of the little ones who was perched in the broad window seat, awaiting her cue, espied in the distance a man making his uncertain way down the slippery road. With her alternate outbursts of terror and amusement as the jaded and shabby stranger staggered along the road, the little miss soon attracted her aunt Edith to the window. Miss Britton peered fixedly at the unkempt figure which by this time had reached the avenue leading to the house. Something in the man's mien as he came up the walk caused her to grow pale, and firmly enjoining

the children not to follow her, she passed quickly down-stairs and met the stranger at the door. He was ushered into the kitchen, where he was fed and warmed. At nightfall, when his drunken stupor had somewhat passed away, Miss Britton let the visitor out at the side door, and giving him a bank note, exacted a promise that he would go away. From a window in her own room she watched his departure. The moon had risen, and the encrusted snow glistened and crunched beneath his steps as he walked on and disappeared in the distance. Two tears—only two—stole down Miss Britton's cheeks. She thought of the unfortunate wanderer plodding over the slippery road to some adjacent town, and as she listened to the merriment that pervaded the house like an aroma, she sighed and pondered on the widely differing conditions of God's creatures that Christmas night. Then she dried her eyes, and, with a smile of resignation on her lips, she mingled with the gleeful throng below."

"Well, that is the whole story," said King, with a sigh. "What follows you have suspected, of course. In a little while it came to be understood

in New Haven that Perkins had returned and had gone away again forever. With all the varying degrees of sympathy and the myriad of other emotions which do credit to the human heart, it was further understood, although never betrayed by word or look in her presence, that Miss Britton had had her romance and that its end had come."

"Going to be here long?" asked my companion after a brief pause.

"A week or two," I returned.

"That's good; we shall become better acquainted, as I intend to stay here a fortnight at least. Mrs. King will be glad to know you. We will make up a party if you like and climb Mount Lafayette to-morrow. I'll have to go in now," he said, consulting his watch, "or Mrs. King will be inconsolable."

We shook hands, and afterward, up in my room under the eaves, as I smoked innumerable cigars and gazed up into the star-enstudded heavens until long after midnight, I thought a great deal about Miss Britton and "her romance." The next morning, after breakfast, when I went out to note

the arrivals from Littleton, everybody, including Miss Britton, with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. King, was on the piazza. I looked for the Kings everywhere, but found them not. My search, however, was cut short by the arrival of the stage, which was crowded. Among the first to clamber down from the roof of the lumbering old vehicle was Curtis Dodge, a banker in one of the interior cities of New York. I had known him several years, and was about to accost him, when, to my horror, he seized the patient mourner for the lapses of Perkins and imprinted kiss after kiss upon her smiling face, only ceasing when she expostulated, saying:

"Why, Curtis! Consider where we are and all the people!"

Mr. Dodge laughed merrily, and espying me he came up and nearly wrung my hand off. In another minute I was bowing confusedly before my heroine of the romance, to whom I had suddenly been presented.

"Mrs. Dodge," said my friend, "has been roaming about these hills for a month await-

ing my arrival. We are building a little railroad from ——"

"Mrs. Dodge!" I exclaimed, interrupting him.

"Yes, this is she," he replied. "Thought I wasn't married, eh? Oh, yes, we have been wedded these twenty years, and one of our three boys is already in college at Cambridge."

And thus Miss Britton, with her pathetic romance, the erring and dissolute Perkins, and the imagined sweetness of childish laughter reverberating through the rooms of the mythical farmhouse at Christmas-tide, were swept into the limbo of uncreated things, where lie buried forever my unspoken eloquence, my unpainted pictures and my songs unsung.

I went again in quest of Herkimer King, and as I searched for him in vain my mind was active. I am not too familiar with the Scriptures, but I remembered something contained in them, and I fully accepted the proposition that all men are lia —liable to indulge their propensity for romancing. Presently there arose the sound of carriage-wheels

and Mrs. King came bowling up the road. Tossing the reins to an attendant, who led away her foaming horse, she sprang lightly upon the piazza, and opened up a lively dialogue with a gentleman who had sprained his wrist by falling from his horse in coming down the mountain drive. Her cheeks were ruddy, her eyes were flashing and her white teeth glistened in striking contrast with the ruby of her lips. I walked over to where Mr. and Mrs. Dodge were sitting, and said carelessly, addressing the latter: "This Mr. King—he is a friend of yours, I believe."

"Oh, yes," she replied, "a new friend. The Kings were at the Crawford House for a week, and I took that delightful creature yonder quite to my heart. I found her husband very entertaining, too, and then I am indebted to him for many little favors. He had the knack of eloquently recommending charming books which I had not read, and then he would produce them for me to read."

"What is his business?" I pursued.

"Oh, he has no business—that is, not in the sense that husband has. He is an artist and

makes for the newspapers pictures which, he says, are a long way after Du Maurier."

"Ah, indeed," I returned dryly. Then after a pause I added: "Supposing you introduce me to Mrs. King. Her husband said she would be glad to know me."

Mrs. Dodge quickly assented, and I was presented accordingly. After a spirited exchange of badinage between Mr. Dodge and Mrs. King, I addressed myself to the latter, saying: "And Mr. King—where is he this morning?"

"Gone back to New York," replied his vivacious wife. "Isn't it too bad? But his time was up yesterday, and he is needed at the office. Such a fellow as he is, too, a perfect athlete. He is going to walk from Littleton to Plymouth and take train from there. It was only under protest that he would permit me to drive him part of the way."

"I trust you left him 'in good form,' Mrs. King. That, I believe, is one of the phrases which finds favor in pedestrianic circles," said I.

"Yes, indeed," she replied gaily, "in excellent form. As he swung down the road he was every

inch a King." Then laughing, she added, with just a hint of pathos in her velvety voice: "The mowers ceased their labors and leaned upon their scythes, to listen, as he went singing afield,

'All in the rosy morning.'"

AN EVENING REVERIE.

AN EVENING REVERIE.

KIND reader, did you ever steal away from everybody and everything, and, seeking your library, sit down in the coming twilight before a glowing grate? If you have, you will sympathize fully with me in that sweet inertia that comes over one as he sits thus and puffs the much abused but ever soothing weed, of which his Satanic majesty is said to have sown the germ. If you have never done so, listen and you may sit by me. The cheerful fire awakens pleasant memories, and the fragrant tobacco induces a mellowness of mind almost ecstatic. When the moon's soft beams fall beside you, as the evening advances, as was the case with me last night, there is little else attainable in this world worth wishing for. You may not see the pictures on the wall, but you feel their presence. You realize that Beatrice Cenci regards you kindly as you puff the smoke rings upward. And though Washington and his small band of followers, who are crossing the Delaware—in a steel

engraving—over behind you, are invisible as you gaze into the fire, you know that they are dividing their attention between the guidance of their frail craft on its perilous journey and your airy musings. There are many other pictures adorning the walls, and you experience that quiet satisfaction inseparable from being in delightful company. On your right sit Washington Irving and his friends, and on your left Shakespeare and his contemporaries, both groups indulging in a chat which you would give half your life—possibly that half you are done with—to have heard. The busts of Burns, of Scott and Byron surmount the mantelpiece; a pair of Rogers' groups are near at hand, and, finally, there are those wonderful entertainers, the books on your library shelves. And if Washington and his followers are mute; if Beatrice is content to entrance the eye without adding the music of her voice; if Irving, Shakespeare and their respective associates say nothing to you, and Burns, Scott and Byron deign not to relax their set features for your instruction, what recks it? The books will talk to you as men can never speak.

You sit within an enchanted circle, and have only to rise, step forward two strides, and, *mirabile dictu!* you may commune with Landor, with Goethe, Shakespeare, Plutarch, Balzac, or any of the others who have contributed their wisdom for the benefit of mankind, from wise Confucius to dainty, bewitching Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

I was sitting thus last evening, when I heard a voice so wondrously modulated and sweet that I fancied, for the instant which it required for me to emerge from my reverie, that Beatrice had surely spoken, and the voice inquired, "May I come in?" Before I could say "Yes," this practical observation followed: "Why, John, you great goose, why don't you light the gas? It is as dark as a pocket here"; saying which, my bonny wife approached me, and brushed back my hair with the same lingering tenderness with which she fondled me many years ago, when we were in the heyday of our honeymoon. We are lovers still, Mary and I—we must always be. Adapted to each other by temperament, education and general tendencies,

our love has grown with our years and strengthened with our strength. Behold in us the happiest couple in Christendom! Not that we are by any means alike ; oh, no! Mary is shrewd, practical—in fact, she is common sense personified. She makes good bargains, takes a wholesome view of life, and does good to all about her as naturally and easily as the sun shines or the wind blows. I am a bit of a dreamer, I am given to the advocacy of ideas which I am so often convinced are impracticable that I have but little faith in my own views ; I am easily imposed upon in numerous ways, and, except at rare intervals, I go about my business feeling, with Meredith, that life is not altogether what we planned it out. As you may judge, Mary is a perfect balance for me. Without her I should be as nothing, but together we are a steady going couple, who admire each other's qualities, and fall more and more deeply in love as we grow older; for in spite of our differing views we sympathize fully on all matters of importance to our own and the well being of those near and dear to us.

I regret that I have not time to tell you all

about ourselves, and give an episode here and there in our married life. Suffice it that we were friends at first, lovers betimes, and "married folk" at last. I would like, moreover, to tell you what we were talking about last evening, but Mary would not approve of it, and as usual I yield to her better judgment. I am so happy under circumstances peculiarly adapted to my eccentric though not altogether sunless nature, that I would communicate my thoughts and the pretty things my wife and I say to each other to the whole world. But Mary says the world would laugh at us, and very likely she is right, so I shall spare you a report of our conversation.

But I may safely tell you what was occupying my mind when Mary came to sit by me. I was thinking of our early love; of how we were associated together in a pretty Massachusetts village, and of our increasing fondness for each other as we approached that period which by a polite fiction is called years of discretion. She grew to be delicate in health as she attained her eighteenth year, and fears were entertained that she would die

of consumption, as her mother had done. Her physician prescribed a change of air, and her father took her abroad. Our parting was very sad, for she was ill and strangely whimsical. "I shall die in some strange land, John," she said, "and shall never see you again." And then she wept softly, and my own eyes were not wholly dry. I had just graduated at the bar, and went to Boston to practice my profession in her absence. During the two years which followed I was moderately successful, but I must confess that I was not happy. Mary's letters and those from her father were not encouraging, but I was young and brave hearted. So I hoped for the best, and, if sometimes I lost interest in my law books, and my mind wandered to the sequestered village where I had met my love, and I fell to thinking fondly of green lanes and of her who used to be my companion amid scenes of quiet loveliness, I came back to myself shortly and resumed the duties of my work-a-day life. I cannot say that I thought of the country with a feeling of regret. I only dwelt on it because it suggested the happiest hours of my

life—my three years as a student in Judge Bascom's office. Although born in the country I was a town man by adoption and instinct, and though visiting the country at favorable seasons of the year and enjoying these changes exceedingly, I admired the rural scenery at certain other periods something after the manner in which that very funny man admired the sea, who, after sailing around Cape Horn, ejaculated in homely rhyme :

> " Oh ! I love the sea, as I've said before,
> But I love it best when seen from shore."

Well, Mary came home at last and we were married. How well I remember that golden August day—the 17th. She had entirely recovered her health, and, oh, how beautiful she was ! I remember that she seemed to me as an angel, and even at the altar my better nature rebelled at the idea of linking her pure life with my imperfect one, and I had serious intentions of forbidding the bans. But I was selfish, as all men are, and, ignoring my own unworthiness, I permitted the ceremony to go forward. As we emerged from the church, followed by the worthy villagers, the birds sang joyously,

and I was very, very happy. I felt that God had indeed blessed me beyond my deserts, but I kept my emotion to myself. A week later, deferring to my whimsical tendencies, and intuitively fathoming my unfitness for the country, Mary announced one morning her preference for the town, and asked me as a favor to her that we go at once to Boston. Her father accompanied us, but he passed away after a few years. He blessed us with his dying breath, and smilingly went forth into the great hereafter. How the past came back to me last night as I sat dreaming my day dreams in the mingled moon and fire light! I was almost a poet then, and if a diviner hand had not swept the lyre to the same purpose, I belive I could have written something beautiful on the "Pleasures of Memory."

"Will I let the children come up?" inquired Biddy, from the dining-room.

The children finally come up. There are three of them—John, nine years old; Henry, seven, and Mamie, three. I object to having the gas lighted when Mary urges its ignition. Behold me victorious in the dimly lighted room! On a low stool at

my side sits Mary, fairer, sweeter than the flowers—those voiceless, yet earnest and convincing preachers. On one knee sits John, on the other Henry, while Mamie clings to my neck, and nestles her sunny head upon my shoulder. Verily I would do without the gaslight always, if only to have the children sit so closely and seem to place themselves under my protection without reserve—to have them look up to me with that aspect of perfect trust which never characterizes my children except when darkness is around us. Of course we must tell them stories, so Mary and I alternate as the inventors of little romances, such as children like. She relates tales of knights and great achievements, and I tell them of the grotesque and fanciful. And how silent the little ones are as Mary weaves her pretty tales of chivalrous men and deeds. How merrily they laugh when I narrate the mythical adventures of impossible boys and girls. We are very happy, I can tell you. Then follows song after song, with very perfect result, for Mary's voice, like her every other attribute, is sweet and winning, and the boys are making good headway with their

music. Mamie and I are the only weak ones in our home quintette, she being too young to learn the songs the boys are taught at school, and I being ambitious to sing the right words to the wrong tune, without making discord, and always failing.

As the evening drew on we purposed to close our delightful session with "Hold the Fort," something perfectly familiar to all of us, even to Mamie. The first verse seemed to limp a little, and I looked inquiringly at Mary, but her glance of encouragement reassured me, and I sang on right sturdily thenceforward. It was during the progress of the second stanza that we discovered the cause of the inharmony—Mamie was singing "Little Brown Jug, You and Me." At this we laughed heartily, and as our voices died away a sort of blindness stole upon me. My wife's sweet face seemed to fade from sight, then the children began to recede from view, at last dissolving altogether, and, starting up, I stood alone. The fire was nearly dead, there were no pictures on the wall, there were no copies of Shakespeare, Plutarch,

Goethe—or of anybody except Coke and Blackstone, and other legal lights, on the single shelf above the fireplace. My vision had passed away, and again I was an old bachelor lawyer—the self-same gray old John Marble, whom my brethren who congregate at the courthouse know so well, and, no doubt, depreciate, were the truth known. I walked stiffly to the window, for my limbs are no longer young, and looking out I beheld the sleeping city bathed in radiant light. The cathedral bells had just rung out the midnight hour. Turning, I marked that the moon's soft beams fell across the oaken floor, as I had seen them rest upon the richly tinted carpet of my library, and a pain like an unexpected twinge from an old sprain shook me, for I knew that the moonbeams lighting my dingy room rested also on a grave in a country church yard not far remote. They have rested there through thirty years—above my Mary's dust. John and Henry and Mamie—God bless you, my dream children!—were never born, but since God willed it so, I thank Him as I brush away an old man's foolish tears.

ESTHER ROMAINE.

ESTHER ROMAINE.

I AM what the world calls "an oldish fellow"; but the boy never dies out of some natures, and mine is such an one. I am as fond of reading sentimental stories, pretty little poems, and sad, weird novels, of listening to the morning songs of the birds and of plucking wild flowers in the fields, as I was years ago, when in the heyday of my youth I was, like my fellows, more or less romantic. Albeit the winters have drifted "like flakes of snow, and the summers like buds between," until I sometimes feel, with Ruskin, that it is a little saddening to watch the golden sunsets, the sun goes down so fast, yet am I young in all but outward form and semblance. I make little pilgrimages when the summer has fled, to the no great neglect of my legal business, to watch the changing colors of the forest trees, and sometimes, once in a few years, I visit New York, and pass a sunny autumn day at Central Park. No words at the command of a superannuated old lawyer, like

the writer, can properly describe the beauties of that marvel of city gardening when the frost has put its imprint on the myriad of trees and shrubs. A lovely spot, to all admirers of art in nature, at any time, Central Park becomes indescribably captivating when its plumage has changed from the emerald of spring and summer, and has assumed the numberless tints of the rainbow. To wander on, heedless of whither my footsteps tend, and note this specimen of gorgeous scarlet, that clump of golden leaves, and the ever recurring browns, silvers, purples and yellows, is my delight. And when the sun shines brightly and the birds sing their melancholy songs—it always seems to me as if they sing in unison with nature; merrily when she is reviving, serenely and with mellowness in the days of her summer opulence, and sadly in the hours of her decay—I feel as if I had come into possession of my Spanish castles, and in heart, at least, I am a boy again.

I recall, at this moment, a visit made to Central Park two years ago. I am not positive whether it was in the last days of October, or in the first of

November. Suffice it that the weather was most beautiful. I had strolled about until I was weary and footsore, and had stopped to rest on the bridge overlooking the lake. As you will remember, this bridge is reached from the Mall by crossing the Drive, and one may loiter there and see all those who pass in carriages. There were but few people visible as I leaned against the rail and surveyed the lovely scene about me. The sun was sinking rapidly below a bank of gray, cold looking clouds, a chilling wind was springing up, and I was about buttoning my coat more firmly around me and setting out for the city, when I noticed a rather distinguished looking gentleman down by the lake. He was, perhaps, five and thirty years of age, and was amusing himself by throwing pebbles out into the wrinkled waters. He was a handsome fellow, smoothly shaven and tastefully dressed, though something about the cut of his attire persuaded me that it was not of American manufacture. I set him down in my mind as an English tourist, and as he was now coming toward me I prepared to scrutinize him more closely.

Just as he was mounting the steps which led to where I was standing, the rumbling of wheels diverted my attention, and I turned my gaze in the opposite direction. Presently, a lady and gentleman came dashing by behind a pair of high stepping horses. From the instant the carriage came within sight until it disappeared my eyes rested on the lady. To say that she was beautiful beyond the power of this hand to express, scarcely dismisses the subject. I never saw, to my recollection, so faultless a pair of shoulders. Her head, too, was a marvel of loveliness. There was a poise about it which enhanced the sweetness of a face reminding me of Lucca's, and the rich locks of hair which escaped from control with the rapid pace, were as those of Dante's Beatrice—like sheaves of gathered sunshine. I stood spellbound, as if an angel had passed my way. For a moment I scarcely breathed, counting it wrong to inhale the air, hallowed as I thought it, by a recent presence bordering on the divine.

"Lovely woman, isn't she?" came from beside me, and as soon as I could recover my equanimity

I turned, and meeting the eyes of the pebble caster, I replied :

" Indeed, sir, you may well say so. Like most men of my years, I have my sweet and bitter memories; I have castles of gold and cedar, and immense domains in dreamland, through which flow silver rivers. My castles overlook lawns of perennial green, and the air is fragrant with the incense of orange blossoms and myrrh. Sitting at my windows at eventide, I see in the luminous atmosphere faces of wondrous beauty, but none fairer or more angelic than hers. A lovely woman, most assuredly."

" I suppose, of course, you know her ?" he returned.

" I haven't that honor. I wish I had," I said. " Do you know her ?" I inquired.

My companion gave a long whistle, and finally answered abruptly : " Yes, I *do* know her ; and she has a history, too ; but it is not much known, nor of particular interest to strangers. Let it pass. But," he added, in a brisker vein, " I am surprised, if you are a New Yorker, that you do not know the brilliant Mrs. Vaughn."

"I am not a New Yorker," I rejoined. "I live in Boston, and have never heard of Mrs. Vaughn, I assure you."

"Well, you have of her husband, surely," my entertaining friend resumed. "She is the wife of Howard Vaughn, the capitalist—Vaughn, Giddings & Gluck, the Broad street bankers. Vaughn is a fine fellow, I think, though I have abundant reason to hate him cordially. But I respect the man and ignore my personal animosity. He likes good horses, good wine and good living, but he is a man of cultivation, also. You may remember him as the companion of George Kennan, who was sent out to construct an overland line of telegraph in northern Siberia, to connect the exisiting lines in British Columbia with the established Russian lines on the Asiatic Coast, some years ago, and which was abandoned with the unexpected success of the second Atlantic cable. Vaughn afterward wrote a book reciting his experiences in Siberia —'Snow Shoes and Sledges,' I think was its title. Oh, yes! he is a clever fellow; he writes articles for the daily papers on finance, essays on

social and literary themes for the magazines, and a poem now and then so sweet and pathetic that you would imagine its author to be some pastoral queen who had never wandered from the shaded lanes and quiet forests of her country home long enough to even hear the echo of a city's hum and bustle."

My companion subsided, and as we had begun walking while he was speaking, he fell to cutting at the bushes with his cane, and seemed to be preoccupied. I had become greatly interested in his remarks, and expressing my thanks for the confidences he had communicated, I intimated that I should be glad to know what reasons he had for hating so gifted a man as Mr. Vaughn. But my words seemed to be utterly lost upon him. Evidently his mind was elsewhere. We walked on in silence for some minutes when my friend asked abruptly :

"Did you notice Vaughn at all?"

I replied that I did not ; that my attention was so much engrossed by the lady and her marvelous beauty that I had not bestowed so much as a glance on her husband.

"I am sorry," continued my companion, "that you did not note him more closely. He is a wonderful man, possessed of a face which once seen can never be forgotten. Born in the country, he has a nature so informed by the idyllic surroundings of his childhood that his manner is almost womanly in its sweetness. Contact with the world in later years has polished him outwardly to the last degree, so that, take him all in all, he is really a most remarkable specimen of simplicity, wordly wisdom, large heartedness, culture and affection delightfully blended."

We had now reached the Exit, and without ceremony my friend called a coupé and plunged into it. I was moving off, not a little perplexed at all I had heard and his unceremonious manner of quitting me, and had just signaled a Fourth avenue car, when a carriage stopped beside me, and a voice I recognized at once said :

"I suppose you would like to hear her history, since you think Mrs. Vaughn so beautiful?"

To my answer in the affirmative, the voice continued : "Well, come and dine with me to-morrow

night, at the Clarendon, and I will tell you about her."

And a hand was put forth which grasped mine cordially, as the speaker concluded: "I somehow took a fancy to you from the first, and over our coffee and cigars to-morrow evening I will tell you a story so strange, inexplicable and sad that you will have something to think of for a long time. Be at the Clarendon at seven o'clock sharp, and ask for Conrad Kirschbaum—pshaw! not a card with me, just my luck—and you shall know all."

I readily assented, and my new acquaintance, falling back among the cushions with a sigh, signaled wearily to his driver to proceed, and the carriage passed rapidly down Fifth avenue, quickly disappearing around a corner.

I dined with Kirschbaum the next evening according to engagement. After dinner he told me the following singular story: He was the son of the Rev. Conrad Kirschbaum, deceased, of Allentown, Pa. In 1870 he had fallen a prey to a malarial fever, and went abroad to recuperate his

health. In Paris he met Miss Esther Romaine, of Albany; they fell in love, became engaged, and were to be married on their return to America. While they were deep in their plans for future bliss, the Commune revolted. The siege of Paris began and progressed without eliciting their attention, until one day, when it was too late to leave the city by the usual methods of conveyance, they awoke to a realization that they were prisoners in a foreign city. From this point I will let Kirschbaum tell his own story:

"Oh! how I loved that girl—how I love her still. But that is not to the purpose. There was only one way out of the city—by balloon. It was with no small difficulty that I obtained Esther's consent to leave by that means, but she reluctantly complied at last. Then I had no end of trouble about getting a balloon, and ran the imminent risk of being shot in making the start. In a few days, however, all was ready. I was to meet Esther at her hotel at seven o'clock in the evening, and from thence we hoped to quit Paris before night had set in. As I was pacing the floor at my lodgings, she came to

me about six o'clock—an hour before the time at which I had agreed to call for her. I remonstrated with her for jeoparding her life by coming out-of-doors before nightfall and without an escort, but she averred that she felt so wretched away from me in the great danger which threatened us and she seemed so dependent on me that I ceased my chiding. We left my lodgings about fifteen minutes before seven, and between seven and eight o'clock we stepped on board the balloon, which, when the word was given, shot up into the air and rose to a great height. Have you ever done any ballooning? No? Well, it is a queer sensation which a man feels on his first trip. The firm earth seems to drop from beneath you, the people and objects below appear to be rapidly falling into space. It is impossible at first to realize that you are ascending. It was a moonlight night and we could see that we were passing over the suburbs of Paris. To our rear lay the vast extent of the city. Beneath us the land, trees, houses and fields swept past in such rapid succession that I decided that I must shortly think about making a landing. On which

side of the city I was, I could not determine, but I knew that at the terrific rate of speed at which we were going, I must descend before long. Faster and faster the now indefinable objects below swept past us, when suddenly the report of a rifle startled me. Breaking from Esther, whose arms were around me, and whose head rested upon my shoulder, I peered over the side of the car, but could discover nothing. We were being fired at, I judged, and so with a view to rising higher, and thus placing ourselves out of range, I began to empty the bags of ballast. I now abandoned all thought of descending. My only hope of safety was to go higher, higher. The balloon seemed to shoot up a limitless distance, as the sand ran out. The moon was so low on the horizon that I knew that it would soon sink and leave us in total darkness and indescribable desolation, but safe at all events from hostile bullets. The darkness and desolation followed very shortly afterward, and I resumed my place at Esther's side. She was brave and calm, and seated up there in boundless space, knowing not whither we went, nor at what

moment we might be plunged into the yawning abyss below us, I felt to the full how dearly I loved her, and how little I deserved her love. A man realizes his utter worthlessness at such times; he feels how completely his poor mortal shell is in the grasp of God; how easy it is to crush him out of existence, and how mean, narrow and inconsequential is all human effort. In the silence of that night, and in the presence of the majestic conditions around us, Esther and I found voice to talk of our love and our future as we had never talked before—as no lovers had ever talked before, perhaps. We spoke low, and with something of the timidity of children when the lightning darts across the skies, accompanied by the reverberations of deafening peals of thunder. It is under such circumstances, sir, no matter how self-dependent a man may be by nature, that he speaks like a sick girl, and qualifies his declarations with 'if it please God,' 'if Heaven approves,' and similar phrases of deference to the Supreme Being whom he feels is very near to him. And thus through the night we sat motionless,

and talked until Esther grew silent and finally dropped asleep in my arms, like a tired child upon its mother's breast. I sat supporting her fair head for perhaps an hour or more, when the first sound that I had heard, except our subdued voices, since the rifle shot as we soared over the Paris fortifications, fell upon my ears. It was a plashing noise, suggestive of water below us, and my heart stopped beating. I listened, and again I heard the complaining voices of the waves. Removing Esther from my arms and placing her in as comfortable a position as possible, I went and looked over the side of the car, but I could see nothing. A dull, opaque gloom, in which nothing whatsoever was distinguishable, was all that met my eager gaze. But after a time I discovered something like motion. Whether it was the rolling clouds or the movement of waves I could not determine. I went back to where Esther was reclining. She was still sleeping soundly, and, kissing her softly, I enveloped her more snugly in the wraps we had brought, and returned to watch developments. As I gazed the sounds seemed to

come nearer and nearer, and at length the moving objects beneath became more distinctly revealed in the increasing dawn, which was apparently breaking. All at once I beheld the movement beneath and around me regular and recurrent, and in my ears sounded the dash of angry waters—the surging, foaming, seething billows of the sea! I suddenly recognized, then, that I had been gradually descending by reason of the percolation of the gas, and so I began again to cast out ballast. This had the desired effect, and we rapidly ascended. No, not we. For when I returned to where I had left Esther sleeping, she was gone."

"I will not weary you," he went on rapidly, "with a recital of what I suffered in the next few hours. Though I was satisfied that I was suspended above the Atlantic Ocean, and the beating of the sullen waves beneath me sounded plainly in my ears, what cared I? Esther, my Esther, gentle, loving, peerless Esther, had perished! And how, only God and the angels knew. I laid down in the bottom of the car and waited for death. It could not be far off, I reasoned, for it was now

light, and as far as the eye could reach there was one vast expanse of water. It was the Atlantic; that was patent, and I made ready to meet my fate. After lying in a semi-dazed state of despair for hours, I was at length awakened to consciousness and action by a rustling, scraping sound. As I staggered to my feet the balloon tilted, and it was only by a quick movement and by strenuously holding on to the rigging, that I escaped being thrown from the car. Ready and willing to die, with nothing but sorrowful recollections and a future as dull and cold as the tomb, Fate decreed that I should live. The car had caught in the top of some lofty forest trees, and in a few moments I was safe on *terra firma.* I found a village near at hand, and having the good fortune to find a man who spoke French, I ascertained that I had come to anchor in Norway. That I was beside myself with grief, you can readily believe. But what could I do? I could not communicate with Esther's friends in Paris, even if they still remained there, which was unlikely, and so I proceeded with all haste to Liverpool, and took the first

steamer for home. From Allentown I wrote to her relatives in Albany the sad story of Esther's mysterious death, and my brother, who is a merchant in Shanghae, being on the point of returning to China, I accompanied him thither, hoping to bury my troubles by diving into commercial pursuits. But it was useless; I stayed in China until last year, and then came to New York as a representative of my brother's firm."

Kirschbaum seemed much moved at this point, and walked nervously about the room for two or three minutes. Then he proceeded:

"Perhaps I told you yesterday that Central Park has a strange fascination for me. No? Well, it has. One day, some months after my arrival, while I was horseback riding, I came upon a lady and gentleman, and that is all I remember. I swooned in my saddle and fell. When I revived I was lying in a summer-house near where I had fallen, and the result of the fall was to put me in bed for three months. You naturally wonder what caused me to faint. I will tell you.

"I had seen Esther Romaine.

"And what was worse, I learned that she was married. You saw her yesterday, sir, in the person of Mrs. Howard Vaughn."

"But how did she escape death?" I inquired, aghast. "Why did she marry, why did—"

"There is where the mystery comes in," he interrupted. "I arranged an interview when I got out again, and she charged me with having deserted her, of having left her to perish in Paris, while she maintained that she was in readiness at the hotel as agreed, at seven o'clock precisely, and that I never came to her, which was true enough. Finally she denied that she ever set foot in that balloon. And so, chagrined at my supposed desertion and almost crazed with fear, she was about to give up all hope, when Howard Vaughn, a casual acquaintance of ours, then came to her like a guardian angel, and got her safely out of Paris. Piqued by my supposed cruelty and subsequent running away to China, as she inferred, and earnestly besought by Vaughn, who really loved her, she finally consented to be his wife. Moreover, she blamed me for writing, wantonly, as she then belived, to her relatives,

thereby plunging them in grief at her death while she was still living and well."

"But who was the woman you took with you by mistake, and whose unhappy death sent you off to China? How in the world could you have made such a blunder? I should suppose—"

"Stop there, my friend," he said, in measured accent, raising his finger; "the woman I took from Paris was Miss Esther Romaine or her ghost. Why, sir, we talked of matters—matters affecting our future—known only to us two. No other person could have—why, sir," he exclaimed passionately, "do you suppose I could have made a mistake? Impossible, absurd, preposterous!"

"But your story is so unreasonable as it stands. I don't believe in ghosts—I cannot understand—"

"You cannot understand," he said, with biting scorn. "I cannot understand it either, nor can she, and we have been studying upon it for months. Do you suppose, sir, that you, who haven't yet had time to even digest the bare facts, can understand what has been and will be a life-long enigma to those who are most vitally interested? Do you im-

agine," he inquired, with a burst of indignation, "that I would bring you here to listen to a tame recital of matters that you could understand after the specific statement that what I had to tell was strange, inexplicable and sad?"

I saw that the man was in earnest, that he was deeply moved; but I could not account for, nor could I scarcely believe, what I had heard, and still I was satisfied this was no madman's tale. The speaker was sane beyond question. I was sorely puzzled. I essayed an apology for what I had said, when Kirschbaum interrupted me, saying soothingly:

"There, there, never mind. I have lost the brightest gem in the casket of womanly grace and beauty, and I lose my temper when I dwell on the horrors of that night. I have made myself quite ill by letting my anger get full rein. It is late; you had better go and leave me to myself."

I was about to withdraw when he said: "I have abused you, sir, but I have likewise honored you. To no other human being have I ever told that story; but I took a fancy to you, as I told you yes-

terday, and broke the seal of silence. Think of me kindly, and forgive my indecorum, if you can. I am terribly unnerved. Good night!"

I got very little sleep that night, and my theories and speculations only plunged me in deeper gloom than ever. I despaired of ever solving Kirschbaum's mystery, but I could not keep his story out of my mind. Thus two days passed, and I had made my plans for returning home on the evening train, when, as I was strolling in Madison Square, I met Mrs. Blossom, a lady whom I had known in Boston many years before. She had married Mr. Blossom in the meantime, and was now a widow. Like many other not over-cultivated women, she entertained a passion for literary and theatrical people, concert and opera singers, artists, sculptors, and persons of that ilk, who gathered about her for several reasons, prominent among which were that she was a kind-hearted, motherly woman, and a hostess withal whose means enabled her to give regal entertainments. She had frequently invited me to her house, and once or twice I had gone, but had generally felt my unfitness to mingle

satisfactorily to myself with the clever people who congregated within her hospitable walls, and I had decided not to go again. But Mrs. Blossom was very pressing, and finally she said : "Do stop over and come to my little party this evening." Then she named many persons of note who would be present ; but I resolutely shook my head, and held that I must positively go home.

"Then you won't have no opportunity of meeting Miss Vaughn, perhaps 'll never see her, and she's all the rage."

I answered quickly : "Well, then, since you will have it so, I'll come."

As the reader may surmise, I changed my mind in view of the suddenly opened prospect of meeting Kirschbaum's love. True, Mrs. Blossom had spoken of the lady as Miss Vaughn, but I had noticed a great many times before that Mrs. Blossom's pronunciation of "Miss" and "Mrs." did not vary. She Missed all ladies, married or single, even as she missed hitting plural verbs to tally with her plural nouns. But let us not cavil at her pronunciation or her grammar ; her goodness of

heart made ample amends for her partiality for two negatives and other eccentricities of speech, as well as for careless pronunciations.

I was not amiss in my calculation, and at ten o'clock that evening I found myself gaily chatting with my divinity of the Park. We talked with the utmost freedom and frankness, the disparity in our ages rendering it unnecessary that we should observe the little ceremonies common between young people in society. We spoke at length of Paris, and she listened attentively to all I said of the French capital, its arts, industries and architectural splendors. She hoped she should go there some day, she said.

"Go there again, I presume you mean?" I observed, adding that I hoped she would find the city more quiet than in the old days of the Commune. She bestowed on me a puzzled look, but said nothing. Presently I continued: "Kirschbaum told me that strange, sad story. Perhaps I ought not to speak of the balloon mystery, but really I have studied over it so much I can scarcely think of anything else." Her puzzled look gradually

changed to one of apparent fright, and to pacify her I concluded quickly: "Pardon me, Mrs. Vaughn, I can understand your feelings; it was indeed a most inexplicable and mysterious affair. The only pleasant thing in connection with it is the manly attitude Kirschbaum maintains. I can assure you and your husband—"

"My husband!" she ejaculated, in surprise; "why, Mr. Marble, I have no husband, at least not yet," she said, blushing. "It is no secret in society, however, that I shall soon wed with Signor Feoretti, the tenor."

It was my time now to ejaculate. "Not married!" I returned; "and who, pray, was the gentleman with whom I saw you riding in Central Park on Monday?"

"Why, my uncle, of course—Captain Peters, of the Inman Line," she replied. "And who is this Kirschbaum," she inquired, "of whom you speak as if he knew me? I remember no gentleman among my friends bearing that name."

"My dear Miss Vaughn," I said, respectfully, "I am all at sea. Somebody has gone out of his

head—possibly I, peradventure another man, but things are getting queerly mixed up," saying which I wiped the beads of perspiration from my face, which were exuding from every pore. "Pray pardon me, but may I ask who you are?"

"Somebody is certainly demented. All your talk about the Commune, the balloon mystery and my going to Paris again was as a sealed book to me, but I let it pass, hoping we should flounder out of the maze shortly. As to who I am, I supposed Mrs. Blossom had told you. I am only an aspiring woman with a soprano voice which the critics say promises future distinction for me, and indeed I have been very successful in 'Mignon.' It is not pleasant for me, as you see, sir, to speak of myself" (her sweet face was painfully flushed), "but we seem to be drifting so hopelessly that I have answered your question in all candor."

As I turned to apologize I saw Kirschbaum on the opposite side of the room, engaged in merry conversation with Mrs. Blossom. He had not seen me, apparently, and I changed my position so that my face would not be visible to him, and said to Miss Vaughn :

"My dear young lady, you shall have an ample apology for what no doubt seems to you like rude conduct from a man old enough to have a proper regard for a lady—a fatherly tenderness, indeed, for a woman of your age ; but before I say a word in explanation I wish to ask one more question. Will you kindly tell me if you ever saw that handsome, smooth-faced gentleman before who is talking with Mrs. Blossom ?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," she replied, "I know him very well."

"Oh, you do, eh !" I returned, petulantly. "I dare say you do."

She looked at me reproachfully, and said very gravely : "We may as well agree to disagree. Your last remark was intended to be invidious, and I submit that you have no reason to annoy me further."

If I had been a younger man I believe I should have determined, as I stood looking down into the pure depths of Miss Vaughn's angelic eyes, to cast the gauntlet at Signor Feoretti's feet, and enter the lists as a competitor for the smiles of her who held

me spell-bound with her graceful beauty. "But no," thought I, "all that is past for me; I am wedded to a memory; let me not add weakness, even in thought, to my palpable rudeness." After a moment I found voice to ask very meekly:

"And who is this gentleman?"

"I thought you knew him or I would have told you that before," she rejoined, half pityingly. "That is Mr. John K——, the somewhat celebrated actor, who has just returned from Australia. He will play a round of old English characters soon, at Wallack's."

"Have you known him long?" I pursued.

"Oh, yes," she said, laughing, "since childhood. He is, in fact, my brother—his real name is Silas Vaughn."

I felt faint and giddy, but soon summoned strength to ask if the gentleman was a man of veracity. She regarded me with a look of genuine sympathy, as if by the quick intuition of her sex she had made a discovery, and said slowly, "Y-e-s and n-o. He is truthful enough about matters of vital importance, but he sometimes lets

his imagination run wild for amusement, and at such times I have heard Mr. Sothern say that he evolves such romances as to create the impression among his professional friends that he missed his calling in not going into fiction. I hope," she continued, with a womanly sweetness that went to my soul, and which I shall never forget, "that Silas hasn't been—"

At this moment Signor Feoretti came up, and I stood to one side; and as this soon to be mated pair were temporarily engaged in conversation, I quietly passed through the throng to the lower rooms. Here, while donning my coat and hat, I encountered and bade Mrs. Blossom an abrupt good night, and thence I proceeded to my hotel. And as I passed thither under the silent, solitary stars, I began to study upon a plan for the regeneration of those misguided sons of men who speak with most miraculous organ, but with an utter disregard of truth. I confess that I have not progressed well thus far in perfecting my plan, and every-day occurrences sometimes make me feel that I have not only entered upon my life work,

but, if we are not without occupations in the next world, that I shall still have food for study and reflection, even after I have passed to where, beyond these voices, all is peace.

AN OLD MAN'S EXEGESIS.

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"MY dear Marble," said a young friend, who met me on the street the other day, "why the Dickens will you persist in associating with that Gregory Judd?"

I know all about Judd. He fails to pay his bills, neglects his engagements and dresses far from fashionably. Judd is what the world styles a shiftless man. His *tout ensemble*, whichever way you view him, reminds you of a shoe that has run down at the heel. The question put to me was a difficult one to answer offhand, and so I did what my fellow-man usually does when he is puzzled. I assumed a look of surprise and replied:

"Why!"

My interrogator, aware that I knew Judd's failings fully as well as he, became indignant at once, and bestowing a look on me which said as plainly as words could do, "Marble, I blush for you," walked away, blushing as he went, whether from

shame for me or from indignation, I cannot pretend to say.

When I reached my office I sat and thought about Judd for a long time, but pondering on the question propounded did not assist me much toward giving a satisfactory answer. Finally I was aroused by a light tap on my shoulder, and looking up I beheld the veritable Mr. Judd himself. He was as forlorn looking as ever, under a venerable hat, matched with an untidy cravat, lack luster gaiters, and a suit of clothes which had not improved on long acquaintance. "I have just dropped in," said Judd, "like Pry in the play, and I hope I don't intrude." He added that having discovered a creditor whom he could not pay coming up the street, he had eluded him by dodging into my office.

An hour elapsed before Judd departed. It was a joyous hour to me, and to him, too, I think, for when he left me the look of weariness which was settled on his face when he came had disappeared, and his countenance beamed as pleasantly as ever Harold Skimpole's beamed in his afflictions. Judd

is, in fact, a sort of modified Skimpole, with embarrassments as numerous, though lacking some of the lax ideas entertained by Mr. Dickens' hero. If my young friend had been present as I pressed a bank note into Judd's hand and wished him better fortune, I should have replied to the query with which this explanation opens something as follows :

There is no good end to be served by my denying that I like Judd immensely, or that his society, despite his many weaknesses, is dearer to me than that of any of my other friends. I always feel younger after seeing him—his presence near me is a perpetual solace. In Judd you behold the friend and companion of my youth. We are getting on in years ; our spring, summer and autumn have passed away, and as we approach the winter of our lives, when the snow is beginning to settle on our heads and beards, and when our faces are beginning to bear witness of heavy weather experienced during life's voyage, we live over in memory the three seasons which are gone, and deduce unspeakable pleasure therefrom. Away up among

the hills and dales of Massachusetts, where the Blackstone winds brightly in the sunlight, a mere brook; where the atmosphere is as clear and fragrant as nectar; where, of all the world, the trees and the fields are of the greenest possible tint; where the robin sings in the sweetest strains at morning; where the bluejay is the bluest; where the whippoorwill chirps in tones of the most melancholy sweetness at night; where the sun is brightest, the sky clearest; where the moon shines the softest; where the stars twinkle the merriest, and where everything around, in our opinion at least, is primitive, beautiful and smiling, we were born, and passed together our dear, dreamy, delicious days of boyhood.

Amid these gentle scenes we read the "Children of the Abbey," the "Arabian Nights," "Robinson Crusoe," and many other delightful books borrowed from a half hermit, half philosopher, who lived in our neighborhood. Along the banks of the most crooked and most lively of all brooks that babble through sweet meadows we have crept with cat-like steps, angling for the wary trout, until

we knew by heart each rock and bush along the devious course of that garrulous streamlet. We have hunted the hills together for miles around for hazel nuts; we have raked hay, stolen peaches and musk melons, and attended huskings, weddings and rural merry makings of every kind, in company, forty long years ago. Schools were not as plentiful in our time as now; but after the busy summer-time was over, when the "school marm" had departed for the season, and the long vacation had passed, then would come some tall, strapping Ichabod Crane to occupy the throne at the district school during the winter, and we would pack up our little stock of books, tallow our great cowhide boots, and adopt the *rôle* of pupils. We were quite "man grown" before we graduated at Science Hill, and we remember very distinctly that near the end of our last term we were not a little chagrined by having the rector's daughter, a pert little miss of perhaps ten years, "go above" us both in the spelling class.

Forty years have wrought great changes even in that secluded region, where the air is so pure and

everything so joyous that it seems singular that people ever become ill or weary there, when we consider that they exist at all in great cities. Much of the somnolence which once lingered about the section has been marred by the advent of the railroad, but sufficient that is old remains to render it the "dearest spot on earth" to us still. How dearly we love to revisit those scenes! How happy we are in walking over the paths we once trod so buoyantly, and in dwelling on old recollections!

We make our excursions quite *incognito*. Sauntering through the town, or lingering in the old burial-ground, reading the names engraven on the slabs, we are almost strangers among those who now people our old neighborhood. But what matters it? If the pine grove is still and neglected where once our laughter echoed so joyously, cannot imagination, dipping her pencils in the sunset's richest hues, fill out the picture? Certainly it can and does, for Judd and I are a pair of very imaginative as well as very soft-hearted old fellows. We are sometimes a trifle melancholy on these visits, particularly when we think of our old

companions. Alas! where are they? Beneath the greensward in the quaint little burial-ground some are sleeping, a part of whom lived and died amid the familiar scenes of youth. Others went forth into the world, were lured on and on by visions of renown and wealth, and returned like poor Slingsby, footsore, weary and poverty stricken, to their birthplace, to

> "Husband out life's taper at the close,
> And keep the flames from wasting, by repose,"

but who died at last, and were gathered to their fathers. Many are scattered about the world, still living; more have died in regions far remote from their homes; while a few, a very few, are yet living, like Miriam Lane, "old and garrulous"— volumes incarnate richly stored with legends and anecdotes bearing on the past.

'Tis a simple tale, this one of ours, scarcely worth the telling, perchance; and yet there is something in it. There is hardly a community, however small, that has not its Judd and Marble, sometimes many braces of them, about whom their acquaintances are ever speculating. We

should not forget that there are many "ups and downs" in life, and that the "downs" are usually the more common. Judd's experience has been wholly with them. There are many things besides prosperity which should endear to us our fellow-creatures. Success commands admiration and should receive its due; but honest failure, with its long train of enervating embarrassments and disappointments, should receive our respect and sympathy. A green spot existing at this advanced day in Judd's heart, as illustrated by the love he bears the region in which he was born and the associations of his childhood—existing where it would seem such repeated failures and disasters in life as have been his could have given birth to nothing but bitterness—speaks of the goodness and largeness of his soul, and makes him worthy of a better friendship than mine.

But a little longer shall we perplex you; our candle is burning low, and ere long its weak light will expire, to be relumed no more.

AGNES LEIGH.

AGNES LEIGH.

MR. JACK MASTERS, clerk to a Wall street broker, had just dined at the St. Denis Hotel, and having sought his room in West 14th street, was seated before a glowing grate. The wind howled dismally out-of-doors, and the snow was falling as Jack calmly lighted a cigar and sat down before the fire. Judging from the varying expressions of his face, very pleasant thoughts were chasing each other to and fro in the graceless fellow's mind as he reclined luxuriously in his easy chair and peered through the little smoke rings which he was sending upward like bubbles out of a child's pipe. Jack Masters was very handsome and elegant, and his only fault, perhaps, was that he had a passion for adventure which was not becoming in a well-bred and properly educated young man. His good mother and father, whom he had left two years before at the old home, in Cortland, N. Y., had views matrimonial and otherwise for their only son, and Jack

knew it. He loved his mother devotedly and respected his father very highly, and was as affectionate, I dare say, as sons on an average are; but he had an indefinable notion that he would one day marry some sentimental creature in a romantic fashion, and he had been dreaming many bright visions over his cigar these March evenings. True, he corresponded regularly with Miss Harriet Van Wormer, and it was well understood in Cortland that when Jack Masters had finished his business education at Salivateum & Co.'s he was to return to his native town, embark in business, marry Miss Van Wormer, join the church and settle down to a life of eminent respectability. Privately Jack disliked this programme, and, as is too often the case when men pretend to be *en rapport* with other people's schemes, he had a whole set of visions which he dreamed at opportune moments, and about which he never talked to any one. I would not say that he ever doubted that he would ultimately carry out his part of the programme as above set down, but he liked to think about other plans and possi-

bilities; though they were always shadowy affairs, as intangible and shapeless as the autumnal mists dimly enshrouding the far-off points as the sun imprints its good-night kiss on forest, hill and mead, and, smiling upward at the blushing heavens, still smiles and vanishes.

On this particular evening Masters was unusually thoughtful and speculative. As he gracefully snapped the ashes from the end of his cigar with his little finger, he laughed softly to himself and murmured :

"I've half a mind to answer it. No harm can possibly come of it. If a man is honorable in his intentions, I don't see any reason why he shouldn't have a little entertainment. Goodness knows I have a tedious time of it here. The life of a Wall street man is like a Christmas annual—bright and gaudy outside, but dismal as a swell party within. I have no taste for this broker's business. I sometimes doubt if I will ever make a good, solid, respectable citizen of Cortland or any other town, and I have a great mind to try my hand at a correspondence which will undoubtedly prove inter-

esting. Miss Van Wormer is all very well in her way, but her letters are scarcely calculated to turn the head of an anchorite or accomplish a miracle in any other direction. Who was that fellow who said that 'there is no loneliness like the loneliness of a great city'? His head was awfully level, whoever he was," and jumping from his chair, Masters exclaimed: "By Jove, I'll do it or I'm a Dutchman!" He was not a Dutchman, so it is safe to assume that he meant to keep his word.

The following paragraph, which he had found in the columns of an evening paper, was what had upset Mr. Masters' equipoise and set his tongue to running at an unusually lively gait:

> "Wanted.—By a young lady, twenty-two years of age, tolerably well educated and traveled, a lady correspondent, not younger than twenty years and not older than twenty-five years. Address, with real name, Agnes Leigh, Station E., New York City."

Since I cannot defend Masters, I may as well say frankly that he proposed to answer this advertisement, leading Miss Agnes Leigh to suppose that he was a lady. Some of my readers may look upon his action in the light of a misrepresentation. I

rather incline to that belief myself, but as the affair is Jack's and not mine, I should be very foolish if I were to quarrel with him about it. So would you.

When a young fellow who has been obtaining his education in a desultory sort of a way at a country college, interspersing his studies with more or less yachting, sprinting, tennis playing and kindred out-of-door pursuits, suddenly settles down in a city like New York and goes through the motions, at least, of being a man of business, he is pretty certain to find his new environment so different from what he has been accustomed to, that the theatre, the billiard-room, the club and drawing-room do not fully recompense him for the open air pleasures he has foregone.

It is in the presence of such conditions that men take naturally to flirtations, and thus it came about that on the next day Jack wrote in a good imitation of a fashionable feminine hand the first of the appended letters. It was duly mailed to his friend, Sam Hooker, in Chicago, with the request to re-mail it to New York, and to forward also any letters received by him addressed to Miss Charlotte Heywood.

246 Wabash Avenue
Chicago, March 20th 87—

My dear Miss —

Having read your advertisement for a correspondent and being just your own age, and with tastes which I infer are similar I address

this note to you, hoping it may lead to our becoming correspondents. I dare say you will receive hundreds of replies to your advertisement, and among the many there will essentially be some whose writers will betray graces of mind and charms of composition, better entitling them to your consideration than I am entitled by anything written herewith. And yet I would like to be the "chosen one"; but I send you this with something of the feeling that sweet Robert Burns experienced as he let the mouse go and fell to thinking of his own future. You will remember the last verse :

> "Still thou art blest compared wi' me.
> The present only toucheth thee.
> But, och! I backward cast my e'e
> On prospects drear ;
> And forward, though I canna' see,
> I guess and fear."

Yes, I guess and fear. I guess you will be overrun with answers and fear you will scarcely care for poor me. However, should you honor me with your attention, I shall bring to the pleasant duty of answering your letter the honesty of purpose which exists only in a woman's heart.

Very respectfully yours,

CHARLOTTE HEYWOOD.

Miss AGNES LEIGH, New York City.

24 Irving Place,
New York, April 2, 187—

Dear Miss Heywood,—Heigho! What a lot of rubbish I have read to-day! I have received a hundred and thirty-five answers to my advertisement. Some of the letters are tolerable, others are stupid and all of one-half of them apparently come from men. I am disgusted with the whole perfidious sex when I think how many have had the audacity to assume such fearfully unreal names as Maude Chesterfield, Heather Browning, etc., expecting me to be deceived by their flowery and vapid utterances. A plague on all the men, say I!

Your letter completely won my heart, and I have no hesitation in saying that I prefer you not only to any of the others who have written to me, but to *all* the others. As Dickens beautifully says, in one of his private letters, written more than thirty years ago: "And for the pleasure with which I shall always think of you, and the glow I shall feel when I see your handwriting in my own home, I hereby enter into a solemn league and covenant to write as many letters to you as you write to me, at least. Amen."

Business settled, let us compare notes. What do you read? Whom do you like best, and what

are you reading now? I am madly in love with Longfellow and Tennyson; don't care much for the pre-Raphaelites. I admire their genius, because it is genius; but Aldrich is a greater favorite with me than his more sensuous contemporaries. You have read "Prudence Palfrey," of course. Isn't it nice? I like John Dent very much, but he isn't as nice as Nevins. What a dear old rascal the fellow was! I am sure I should have fallen straight in love with him had I been in Prue's place. Oh, isn't she a darling!

About this correspondence, here is how I came to advertise. We are strangers here, papa, mamma and I. We live in New Orleans and came North last month. Mamma is an invalid, and papa has the greatest faith in Dr. Brown-Sequard, and brought her here to be treated. Of course I have been very lonely with no friends as I had in New Orleans, and so, while I was complaining of the dullness, papa proposed that I should advertise for a lady correspondent. "But," said I, "some gentleman will palm himself off on me as a lady, and the first thing I know I shall be in love, engaged, and perhaps married." Papa laughed heartily at the idea, and said: "Let me pick out the correspondent you shall select when the an-

swers begin to come in, and I'll make no mistake, puss." So, when my letters began to arrive, he rejected one after another until he came to yours. He read it very carefully, and said : "That young lady can be trusted. There is a ring about what she says that carries conviction with it." And thus it happened that you were our choice. Papa and I seldom agree on any subject, but it is true that my heart yearned toward you from the first, and papa's approval of the selection I had mentally made was all that was necessary to my happiness.

I hope you won't find me dull and regret that you wrote to me. You must excuse me now as we are going to Wallack's to-night, and I am in a desperate hurry. Write soon.

Affectionately yours,

AGNES.

MISS CHARLOTTE HEYWOOD, Chicago, Ill.

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246 WABASH AVENUE,
CHICAGO, ILL., April 5, 187—.

DEAR MISS AGNES,—I was overjoyed on returning home from a drive on the Drexel Boulevard this evening to find your capital letter of the 2d instant. I have been out riding with brother Hal, the dearest old brother you ever saw. He is in

college at Ann Arbor, but occasionally he runs home and keeps us in excellent spirits for a week, and then vanishes like an exhalation. Hal is three years my senior, tall, black as a bandit, and a tornado incarnate of compliments, sweet nothings and poetry. All the girls in Chicago adore him. I wonder if you would like him, too. Dear old Hal! How I love him!

I have just finished reading Irving's "Life of Goldsmith," and I scarcely know which I like the more, Irving or poor Goldy. They are both entrancing. I have read Irving a great deal, and at one time refused to believe that there was anything half as nice as "The Alhambra," but as we grow old—ahem!—we get new notions. Latterly I have taken up Sir Philip Gilbert Hammerton. His writings are very good reading, though I don't like them as well as Mr. Harte's delightful sketches. But Hal is always saying: "Brace up, young lady, and read Herbert Spencer, or Arthur Helps, or Hammerton," and my regard for that graceless brother of mine is so great that I try to please him.

Yes, I read "Prudence Palfrey" in the *Atlantic*. I was madly in love with Dillingham, and felt quite angry with Mr. Aldrich for upsetting all my hopes and plans as to the result. A lady who

lives near us said she saw through the whole story from the first, and thought me very stupid because I was unsuspecting to the last. I told Hal about it in one of my letters, and he replied: "Your friend is troubled obviously with big head. I don't believe she did any such thing. 'Prudence Palfrey' was read by almost every man in college, and the denouement was a genuine surprise to all of us." I don't know what Hal means by "big head," but I suppose it is a slang phrase at Ann Arbor. Hal is always saying things that I don't understand, and when I remonstrate with him he chucks me under the chin and says: "It is all right, sis. I am your brother, you know, you know, by Jove." When Mr. Sothern was here last we went to see him, and Hal has never ceased since to give us "Dundreary on a half shell," as he calls it. Indeed, Hal does it very well for an "armature," as Mrs. Partington would say.

It is still cold here, but I dare say the birds are clearing their throats in New York, and ere many weeks you will begin to visit Central Park. We have a park here, but it is scarcely to be compared with yours. I love New York dearly, and often indeed have I passed a delightful day trip-

ping through the byways and sailing on that sweet little lake at Central Park.

You New Yorkers have many advantages over us Chicagoans. We have no Theodore Thomas to make music as sweet as the songs of angels for us to listen to, in a fragrant garden glittering as green and beautiful under the gaslight as if it were a little section of fairy land. But we are quite content, and so long as we get a glimpse of New York occasionally we are not disposed to wish our home elsewhere than by the side of this beautiful lake, which glistens under the moonlight as I write, like a sea of quicksilver, and calls up a recollection of all the gorgeous scenery which Charles Warren Stoddard saw, or thought he saw, in the South Sea Islands. What a writer that man is! Have you read "South Sea Idyls"? If not please do for my sake. You will be more than delighted, I am sure.

By the way, Hal thinks of visiting New York in July, and would like to call on you. I haven't mentioned our correspondence to him at all, and of course I shouldn't think of sending him to see you, unless you and your good parents fully approve. Have you any objection to my showing him an occasional paragraph in your letters?

Hal is waiting to take me to dinner and then to McVicker's. So I must therefore close "with all regret and all good wishes, and so good night."

Affectionately yours,

CHARLOTTE.

No. 24 IRVING PLACE,
NEW YORK, May 5, 187—

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—A month has passed since yours of April 5th reached New York, but I assure you it has been no fault of mine that I did not reply sooner. We have been to Washington on account of mamma's health. The weather, contrary to your anticipations, has not been very spring-like here, but in Washington words fail to give an idea of how very beautiful it is there already. The trees are clothed in their spring suit of green, the grass is up and the flowers are blooming as generally as they will be here a month from now. We instructed our landlady in Irving Place to forward all letters to the Arlington, where we were stopping. But as bad luck would have it, your perfectly charming epistle was mislaid by a stupid servant, and was only found yesterday. We returned this morning.

It is hard to resist the temptation to say some-

thing about Washington; but that city has been written about until everybody knows it as thoroughly as if he had lived there. I had a very delightful time. Papa knows a great many newspaper men, and also many members of Congress, and we were thus afforded opportunities, through their acquaintance with men and things, to visit the White House and other interesting places, and to see more of each than is usually accorded to the casual visitor. I have seen all the celebrities, but after all they are men like papa, and only now and then is there one half as good looking.

From my window I could see the historic Potomac winding like a silver ribbon through a beautiful groundwork of glorious green; also Arlington, where General Lee used to live, Munson's Hill and Fort Stevens, of war renown, etc. Fairfax Court House and Bull Run are not far off, but they are not visible from the city; at least so I was told. One of my pleasantest experiences was an inspection of the Capitol. I visited it under the protection of an enthusiastic delegate from one of the territories. Before we made our visit he said: "Do you know the frescoing in that building is really beautiful? People go to Rome and

Grenada, and roll their eyes like dying geese over work far inferior to that which Mr. Brumidi has been doing up there, in the many years he has been at work. You can see the old gentleman any day suspended on a scaffold and busily engaged in adding one more masterpiece to the many contained in the building. He is quite old now, and as I watch him in his declining years with frosted head and beard toiling patiently and with cheerfulness, I recall what I once heard Bishop Clarke, of Rhode Island, say in his lecture, 'The World Moves,' about the old monks laboring unceasingly in their cloisters, content if after years of weary toil they could give the world another book. Mr. Brumidi has no desire for fame. He has applied his life and his genius to beautifying the interior of the Capitol, and it will be his monument. Some of the committee-rooms which have flowered under his clever pencil are magnificent." I could not quite reconcile what I saw with the view as thus expressed, and perhaps papa is right in saying that the gentleman's sentiments are patriotic and, therefore, to his credit, but that his ideas of art are peculiarly Western.

How did you enjoy your evening at McVicker's? I hardly know what to say about meeting Hal;

though I should dearly like to meet his delightful sister. We will talk more about his visit anon—when Hal is ready to come East. You may show him such portions of my letters as your own good taste may approve.

I am going out this evening—to the Fifth Avenue Theatre. My uncle Sheridan, who joined us in Washington, accompanied us to New York. He is a South Carolinian and very nice. He is only thirty years old, being papa's youngest brother. He lives at home in Greenville, S. C., on the old plantation with grandmamma and the slaves, the latter now happily emancipated. Uncle Sheridan proposes to return home shortly. It is his first visit on this side of Mason and Dixon's line, but I scarcely think he is enjoying it a bit more than we enjoy having him with us. With all respect for Hal, I must say that to my mind uncle Sheridan is the one man of all others. Not that I am in love with him. No, indeed! But I would be if he were not my uncle. I can assure you it can be said of him as Byron said of uncle's namesake:

> "Heaven never made but one such man,
> And broke the die in casting Sheridan."

I had never read "South Sea Idyls," but I have induced papa to buy the book, and already I am

deep in the delightful story about "Chumming with a Savage." I will learn wisdom from your brother, and read some of the books he recommends. I know that the brother of so sweet a sister must have excellent taste. All of Herbert Spencer that I know is one phrase: "In its ultimate essence nothing can be known." I should not have known that much but for uncle Sheridan. He says he once quoted that sentence to a Yankee whom he met in Charleston, and the fellow said: "Oh! by gosh now, that ain't so. A limburger cheese can be known in its ultimate essence or its sooper-natural essence either." But I don't believe that story. Uncle is such a romancer! He would tell you anything if he thought it would make you laugh. Besides, he does not like the Yankees, or *thinks* he does not. He admits, however, that he is finding the ladies and gentlemen at the North about as they are elsewhere. Here he is now; I must fly.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,

AGNES.

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246 WABASH AVENUE,
CHICAGO, ILL., May 15, 187–.

MY DEAR MISS AGNES,—There are a great many sweet things in life. A poem, a song or a flirtation

used to meet my views very well in that respect; but latterly I have come to think your letters better than all the rest. I have been on the anxious seat for weeks, and had feared that in some way I had offended you. But your letter of the 5th, explaining as it did why I did not hear from you before, sweetened my whole existence. All day long I ran about the house singing the liveliest airs and reciting bits of poetry from my favorite authors. Wasn't it Béranger who described how he ran up seven pairs of stairs in the brave days when he was twenty-one? Well, I have been a sort of female Béranger ever since your letter came. It was like the dew to the drooping flower, like a ray of sunshine on a dismal day, like moonlight on the lake. Oh! darling, it was everything to me, your poor, tender-hearted little friend. I am beginning to love you devotedly, and I shall certainly send Hal to New York to see you. You *must* meet him.

I was much interested in your description of the sights you saw at Washington. I have never been in that city, and your little stories entertained me wonderfully.

I have taken quite a fancy to your uncle Sheridan and shall be delighted to hear more of him,

but my interest in him is as nothing compared with my burning desire to see you. Indeed, I find that I care very little for men. Looking back across an expanse of every-day experiences I descry here and there a friendship with men that I would rather not have erased, but I can think of no one to whom my heart has gone out fully and unreservedly as it has to you. I have never been in love with a man, which may account for my falling in love with a woman. And you love me a little in return, don't you?

Since writing you before I have been having some queer experiences. A man, old enough to be my father, proposed for my hand, and I rejected him, of course. It was a very painful affair to me, for my suitor was an eligible match enough for those who believe in the May and December style of unions. He is rich and has always been very kind, but I had to say nay. Poor fellow! I hope he will meet with better fortune next time. Do you blame me?

I have just received a jolly letter from Hal. He has written a story for the college magazine. He says: "Oh, Lot, if I could only moralize, what a chap I would be! But I can't be wise to save me, for more than a minute at a time. When I think

how Thackeray and George Eliot spin out their wisdom I become broken-hearted straightway." Hal writes very nicely, though, I think, if he *is* my brother, and I have replied as follows :

"You lament that you cannot moralize. You do better—you let your characters tell their own stories, as you did in 'Seeking for Bait,' and do their own moralizing. You don't have to stop every now and then to give them a lift in order to prevent your productions from degenerating into trash—as too many do. Take my advice, my big brother, and don't try to drag in any more moralizing than you can help. It isn't popular; it isn't in good form. It looks as if there were a defect in the plot or in the characters when so many side lights are necessary to help the actors through; and, moreover, it is generally a clear waste of ammunition, as ninety readers out of every hundred skip the moralizing and don't bless the moralizer. I maintain that it isn't fair of any writer who sets out to tell a story to leave his characters to take care of themselves while he indulges in little digressions specially designed to give his own smartness an airing. It is in bad taste—it is disrespectful to the people he calls into being to give them his second best speeches, and to keep all the

choicest bits for his own private speaking. It is egotistical; it looks as if he couldn't bear to have his own personality thrown into the shade, even by his own creations."

Of course I am no critic, and perhaps the dear fellow will laugh at my assumption of wisdom, but I know what I have said is true, and laugh or not laugh, Mr. Hal shall have a bit of sisterly advice and encouragement.

Don't go flying off again and leave me to run to seed, as you did before, and believe me,

Devotedly thine,

CHARLOTTE.

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24 IRVING PLACE,
NEW YORK, May 30, 187—

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,—Ever since your delightful favor of the 15th instant reached me I have been on the go. Uncle Sheridan only started for home last evening; and being intent on seeing as much as possible in a given time, and not caring to "play a lone hand," as he expresses it, he has been whirling me from theatre to concert, from concert to opera, and from opera back to theatre. Even my Sundays have not been my own, for he was bent on hearing Beecher and Frothingham,

and could do nothing without his "guide, philosopher and friend," as he calls me.

Well, he has gone, and I hope that I may now be able to do my share of letter-writing. I haven't much to say this time. If I thought you would care for a critique on the plays I have seen, the concerts I have attended and the operas I have heard, I might make a long letter. But of course you see the New York papers, and after such clever writers as those who conduct their dramatic and musical departments have had their say, anything I might feel impelled to offer would sound absurdly commonplace.

I felt much flattered that my previous letter should make you so happy, and I despair of making proper recognition of the many kind words you have said of my poor missives.

I liked the extracts from your letter to Hal. I is a wise view to take of the matter, and if he really cannot moralize he can certainly do no better than accept your idea about it. As for myself, I care more as a general thing for the moralizing in the books I read than for plots or incidents. But I am not clever enough to argue the question with you. I should be glad to see his story when it is printed.

You did quite right about rejecting your ancient

suitor. The poet probably had such a match as your union with the old gentleman in view when he wrote:

"Love is like the rose;
Oft seeing scarce a month,
Ere it withers where it grows."

Girls who marry old men because they do not quite hate them, under the impression that love may come, generally make a mistake at once foolish and wicked. As uncle Sheridan says, the aim of young ladies should *not* be to get married. He holds that marriage is a great institution, and without it there would be a great depletion of the census (sage man!). But he says it has its drawbacks; and no person, male or female, should embark in such a serious business unless impelled by an inward force so overwhelming that nothing but marriage will keep it in abeyance. This inward force, he says, is love (true love), and the only quality that will endure through life's vicissitudes and continue until death. I think myself that about half the people who marry are worse off than they would have been single. I have a theory that somewhere in this world there is a mate for each of us—a mate fitted by temperament, education and natural tendencies—to make the other supremely happy.

"What avails it," asks Emerson, "to fight with

the eternal laws of mind, which adjust the relation of all persons to each other, by the mathematical measure of their havings and beings?" He continues: "Gertrude is enamored of Guy; how high, how artistocratic, how Roman his mien and manners! To live with him were life indeed, and no purchase is too great; and heaven and earth are moved to that end. Well, Gertrude has Guy; but what now avails how high, how aristocratic, how Roman his mien and manners if his heart and aims are in the Senate, in the theatre and in the billiard-room, and she has no aims, no conversations that can enchant her lord? He shall have his own society. We can love nothing but nature. Nothing," he concludes, "is more deeply punished than the neglect of the affinities."

The great trouble seems to be, however, that our affinities, not being distinguishable by strawberry marks on the left arm, or anything equally tangible, we miss them in the crowd, and such of us as marry take a great risk. If we don't get the wrong mate it is a wonder; and I am actually astonished that all marriages are not misfits. But then we do not know how few of them are successful. Pride keeps many tongues still. But we know from those who *will* talk that the hand is given where the

heart can never be in its entirety oftener than it is pleasant for fledgelings like you and me to contemplate, in view of our liability to find ourselves sailing on a sea of connubial glory, "at no distant day," as the newspapers say.

I hope I do not bore you with my long letters. If I do, be frank and say so, and I will make them briefer.

Affectionately yours,

AGNES.

MISS CHARLOTTE HEYWOOD,
Chicago, Ill.

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246 WABASH AVENUE,
CHICAGO, ILL., June 20, 187—

MY OWN DARLING,—Yours of the 30th ultimo found me ill with periostitis, which has made me your insolvent debtor until now. I have been utterly unable to use my right hand for three weeks, and even now I respond at the risk of a relapse. I can only stand the pain long enough to jot down a line or two to assure you of my heartfelt gratitude for your most welcome letter. I am almost frantic because my illness will prevent me on this occasion from answering you even as well as usual—and that is not saying anything

remarkable. I will make a fresh attempt, however, as soon as possible.

Hal writes me that he is going to New England with Fred Ballantyne, a college chum, and tells me to address him at Rye Beach, N. H., after July 1st. I have been quoting extracts from your letters in my epistles to him, and he is very anxious to meet you. May I write to him to call on you?

My wrist aches, so I shall be obliged to finish this letter to-morrow, if I can. If not then—I dare not set a time. Perhaps I had better mail this much at once, and have it off my mind. Meantime allow me to assure you that

"There's not an hour of day or dreaming night but I am with thee;
There's not a wind but whispers of thy name;
There's not a flower that sleeps beneath the moon
But in its hues or fragrance tells a tale of thee."

Fondly thine,

CHARLOTTE.

MISS AGNES LEIGH, New York.

P. S.—I must positively leave Chicago for a time and seek much-needed rest. I will answer your letter—such a charming letter it was, too—immediately on my return. As I don't know exactly where I shall be, I will relieve you of the task of writing until you hear from me again, though I

shall almost die in the absence of your exquisite letters. My dear aunt Sarah, who is my only living relative except Hal, proposes taking me into Ohio for a breath of pure air. Dear Aunty is an Ohioan, and she divides her faith in the curative properties of the Ohio atmosphere equally with her belief with the efficacy of cold water, which latter she maintains has nearly cured my wrist.

C. H.

Masters was really ill, and was going home to Cortland for a fortnight, and he could not afford to have any letters from strange young ladies passing through the hands of the Cortland postmaster, Mr. Breitman Van Wormer, father of Miss Harriet.

246 Wabash Avenue,
Chicago, Ill., July 8, 187—

My Sweet Darling,—I have to-day returned fresh and invigorated from a sojourn at Springfield, Ohio. We stopped there by chance, and found the little old-fashioned city so delightful that we took up our residence at the Lagonda House, and lived there like princesses of the realm until yesterday.

Recurring to yours of May 30th, which my hateful malady prevented me from answering at length, I must first scold you a little for your closing paragraph. You say:

"I hope I do not bore you with my long letters. If I do be frank and say so, and I will make them briefer."

I think, my dear Agnes, if you only knew how much real good your letters do me ; how much better and happier and stronger and less lonesome I have been since our correspondence began, instead of expressing any fear of my being wearied you would thank God for having given you so much power to do good. I remember how, when I was a child at home, my mother used to come softly into my room at night while she thought I slept ; and, as she bent lovingly down to drop a tender kiss on my little brown face, she would gently whisper : "May Heaven make my child a blessing!" And as I read your letters and gather strength and courage from their cheering words, the thought often comes to me that your mother, too, has prayed that you might live to be a blessing to others. And I say to myself, "That prayer has been answered." Whether I reply to your letters as they should be answered or not, of this

one thing you may be sure; I *do* appreciate and shall always be very grateful for all your kind efforts to amuse, instruct and help me. I remember that one morning I came down to breakfast feeling cold and cross and not well disposed toward my fellow-creatures. A letter from you was awaiting me, and as I read it a glow of kindliness, a gushing desire to shake hands with everybody and to wish all a merry Christmas, came over me; just the sort of feeling we experience after reading Dickens' genial sketches. Make your letters briefer? No, ma'am, if you love me.

I have just received a letter from Hal, some extracts from which I will give you, since you will find his writing more interesting than mine. He says, under date of Rye Beach, July 5th:

"My Dear Lot,—I came up here from Boston a week ago. I like the place amazingly as a place, but so far as my experience enables me to judge there is an infinite space for improvement in the hotels. I have taken up my brief abode at the Leamington, the leading caravansary of the place. I can't repress a sigh when I contemplate in imagination what the Farragut, the Sea View House and the other fashionable hostelries must be, with the Leamington occupying the pinnacle of

popular favor. I engaged a room by telegraph before leaving Boston, and on arriving about 11 P.M. was ushered into my palatial quarters. In the matter of proximity to heaven my room was almost sublime; but at this point all relevancy to the superb and grand ingloriously ends. Miserably furnished, with two beds, on one of which a stranger here, like myself, had stretched his weary legs, the room was not particularly enticing. However, I was tired and sleepy, and my room-mate, who had not yet surrendered himself to the embraces of the drowsy god, proving of a loquacious and entertaining turn of mind, I got along very comfortably until sleep weighed my eyelids down, and I fell to dreaming pleasant visions, under the soporific influence of the dashing waters' music, as the waves came softly breaking on the shore, scarcely ten rods from my window. The table at the Leamington does not in any manner rival that of the Sherman House or the Grand Pacific. The coffee is weak and muddy, the steak is tough, the mackerel salter than the tears of old Neptune himself, and the attendance despicable. The dining-room reminded me of a circus. I removed the disfigured bodies of four flies which had lain down their lives as a sacrifice at some time when the wheaten grits

in which I found them were hot and uncomfortable, before I could proceed satisfactorily with my frugal meal. From all this you will correctly infer that I did not achieve at the Leamington that easy and pronounced success which usually attends my gastronomic efforts, and that when I passed out from its venerable walls to go and seek Ballantyne at his mother's dainty cottage, my feelings were akin to those entertained by the warriors of old, who, making unsuccessful forays on the domains of adjacent rulers, were skinned alive in reality, as I was in a pecuniary sense, and had very little done to make them happy in return.

"But leaving the hotel and getting out-of-doors Rye Beach, being a thing of beauty, becomes a joy forever. I daily turn my idle footsteps toward the beach, and, lingering long, watch the rolling waters which break soft and low on her sandy shores, as if in respect for her venerable years.

"When Ballantyne was in Naples last year, he worked out a theory in verse, that he could hear the curfew bells in his native England, and having had the good fortune to get his 'pome' printed in the New York *Home Journal*, he asks me to clip and send it along. Here it is:

"'A grand old hymn sang those village bells,
Which I heard in the golden past;

Their cadence was mellow, but clear and high,
And I hear them again 'neath the starlit sky !
And a spell o'er my soul is cast.

I stand again midst whispering trees,
And their murmur a story tells
Of wonderful valor, of love and fame,
While I listen with longings too sweet to name
To the song of those evening bells.

There are thoughts I fancied were gone for aye,
But they come trooping back to-night ;
There are unspoken hopes and visions rare,
A locket of gold and a ringlet of hair
And a face of wondrous light.

Loved forms return at this curfew hour,
And dreams which ended in sadness ;
Old memories, sweeter than breath of June,
Scent of faded flowers and a long lost tune,
Which chasten my hours of gladness.

Ring out, oh ! bells of the by-gone years,
Your voices are dearer to me
Than all musical strains on earth beside,
As your mellow tones reach me at eventide
From over the shimmering sea.'

"You must excuse the appearance of this letter. I am writing with what Sam Weller would call a soft-nibbed pen ; my fingers are as far from pliable as a patent poker ; which fact, combined with the circumstance that too many Rye Beach cigars have destroyed my usually good nerve, ought to account for any sins, either caligraphical or rhetorical. Moreover, I am writing in a hurry, while dinner is preparing, and there are many conditions about me not conducive to letter-inditing. Through the open window I plainly hear the waves pounding

melodiously and regularly on the beach beyond; the wind, which blows freshly from the sea, comes laden with a wealth of fragrance in which the odors of clover bloom and new mown hay are blended with the saltness; a lively brook babbles hard by, and seems to whisper sweet stories of ease and idleness to all who listen; the birds sing, the flies buzz—and bite too, for that matter—and the thin gray clouds drift lazily across the serenest of all possible skies. Who could escape feeling indolent under the influence of all this? Certainly not I.

"*Midnight.*—I have just returned from a hop at the Farragut House, and will add a line to the above and send my letter down-stairs to go off in the early mail. Your brother Hal, as you may infer, does not intend to rise with the lark to-morrow morning, sister dear.

"Do not think I have forgotten about Miss Leigh. I have not, and I hope your next letter will convey permission for me to call on her when I pass through New York *en route* to Chicago, about the 12th. But I have found a new divinity, and have, of course, man fashion, been making myself agreeable. I had some excuse for so doing, as she is undeniably pretty and cultivated. And pretty and cultivated young ladies are like Christian

charity—a rarity under the sun—particularly under the sun here at Rye Beach. The number of simpering, addle-pated and shallow-minded girls is simply heart-rending. But you find them everywhere.

"'They're like the poor—they're always with us;
Burrs on the coat-tails of society
Which won't be brushed away.'

"I am sorely stricken with Miss Julia Twombly, of Northampton, Mass., however—my partner at to-night's ball. She is actually 'half human, half divine,' like Dr. Holland's specimen woman. I am afraid I flirted with her in a most outrageous fashion. She recited Shelley to me, and I, in the *rôle* of a *blasé* man of fashion claiming to be thirty years old, responded by talking about things of twenty years ago and cynically quoting Bret Harte's pretty verse:

"'Then my friend was a hero and then
My girl was an angel. In fine,
I drank buttermilk; for at ten
Faith asks less to aid her than when,
At thirty, we doubt over wine.'

"She seemed to pity me, and rather regretted, I think, that I am not a total abstinence man, like her good neighbors up in Massachusetts. At all events, she seemed to like me very well, and I promise myself much pleasure in her society during

the remainder of my stay. Oh, Lot, she is wonderfully nice and exasperatingly clever! Now, don't blame me for faltering in my allegiance to your unknown seraph, Miss Leigh. You know I cannot resist the temptation to make the most of a bright reality, even if you have fired my soul with your praises of one who at best is as yet a mere abstraction.

"However, if your *rara avis* will permit me to call on her, I will straightway transform myself into a pink of propriety; and if she pleases me, will forswear flirtations forever and a day, and be as faithful and true to her as the shadow that she casts.

"You will, I know, regard this episode with Miss Twombly as perfectly natural, for I am a disciple of the stranger in 'Lucille,' who says:

> "'Man's life is short, and the youth of a man
> Is yet shorter. I wish to enjoy what I can,
> A sunset, if only a sunset be near;
> A moon, such as this, if the weather be clear;
> A good dinner, if hunger come with it; good wine
> If I'm thirsty; a fire if I'm cold; and, in fine,
> If a woman is pretty, to me 'tis no matter
> Be she blonde or brunette, so she let me look at her.'

"While I am home comparatively early, like a pious brother, and scratching away for your edification, like a devoted one, the festivities still continue at the Farragut House. The busy feet of the dancers ceased half an hour ago, but the grand

piano, under the skillful touch of somebody's pliant fingers, is making itself heard. What more delicious than music on the midnight air? As I write there comes to my ears amid a myriad of variations, Balfe's old, but ever sweet refrain, 'Then You'll Remember Me.' Just now an unbroken strain reached me, but anon some truant wave, more boisterous than those it followed, drowns the piano's tones, and the music of the one is lost in the complaining of the other. At this moment the music of the sea alternates with the strains floating over from the Farragut, and the latter are heard only at intervals, even as a changeful wind brings plainly to our ears, then wafts them from us altogether, the tuneful chimes of distant wedding bells. I wish you were here to enjoy the beautiful moon, the mingled music of the waves, and that Farragut House piano, and the cool, delicious breeze. It would put the roses into your cheeks to be here, even if you did keep as ridiculous hours as your

"Ever loving, HAL."

If you love me, Agnes darling, let Hal call and see you. I await a reply with the highest hopes.

Always your own,

LOTTIE.

Miss AGNES LEIGH, New York.

Blank No. 1.

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

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A. R. BREWER, Sec'y. NORVIN GREEN, President.

0210

Dated Chicago July 11 187

Received at 195 Broadway July 11

To John Masters,
31 Wall St,
N.Y.

Miss Leigh. telegraph Heywood as follows: "Mamma overcome by heat and we go to Long Branch. Papa positively objects to your brothers visit at present. Avert by telegraph if necessary"

Samuel G. Hooker
246 Wabash Avenue.

To Collect
St Rm

READ THE NOTICE AT THE TOP.

As the reader may surmise, Masters has been falling in love with Miss Leigh more and more deeply as the days have run into weeks and the weeks into months. His tactics looking to his gaining an audience with her have fallen to the ground. The brother Hal stroke of policy was a good one, but it has failed. He has determined, therefore, to tear away the veil behind which he has been hiding, and appear to his deceived and trustful correspondent in his true colors. He purposes doing this by letter.

"Miss Van Wormer and my parents' pet schemes can go to the dogs for aught I care," he said; "marry Miss Leigh I will if she will overlook the astounding deception I have practiced. It was all for love," he ejaculates, as he paces up and down his room. Then follows this bit of rhapsody :

"Oh ! woman, woman ! You impale us on a lance as long as life. Had Fate not willed it otherwise, we might detect the incipient shaft lurking beneath the smile which wreathes thy baby lips, or see it darting from the dancing eyes of maid and matron fair. As it is, we dangle near thee always—

pierced through the heart—yet all oblivious how and when you dealt the painless blow that makes man thine forever."

As Masters walks to and fro you notice that his face wears a look betokening physical suffering. Scrutinizing him carefully in the dimly lighted room, you will perceive that he carries his right hand in his vest. He is suffering again from an attack of periostitis, and his right arm is useless. Accordingly he has sent by an American District messenger for his cousin, Tom Somerby, of the *World*, once aptly described by George Lanigan as "a chain lightning telegrapher and a thundering good newspaper man," to come in and act as his amanuensis. Tom and he were at school together at Amherst in their boyhood, but though living near together in New York they see very little of each other. They have not met in six months; but Jack thought of Tom immediately in casting about in his mind for some suitable confidant, and sent for him.

"Tom," said Jack, when the former had arrived and they were lighting their cigars, "I've sent for

you to do a little confidential writing for me. You know all about Miss Van Wormer. She's a good girl and all that; but, confound it, I have no heart to marry her. She is too good for me. Indeed, Tom, I am a sad dog. And what I want you to do is to write a letter from dictation. Have you any objection?"

"Not the slightest," replied Tom.

"Thanks," continued Masters. "Help yourself to pens, ink and paper and go in."

"All ready," said Tom, after some little delay.

"Never mind the date or the address. I'll manage to scrawl those afterward. Now:

"'I received your telegram, and it found me so ill that I cannot write. Consequently I must dictate this letter, which will be sad enough before it is finished, to an amanuensis who will betray no secrets, unless those who are unlikely to write for me——'"

"Hold on, Jack," interrupted Tom, "this seems rather loose jointed."

"Let me look at it." returned Jack. "I am

not accustomed to dictating, and have, no doubt, made a mess of it."

Somerby handed the page to Masters, and the latter, holding it awkwardly in his left hand, turned livid and nearly fell to the floor as his eyes rested on the handwriting. Tom sat gazing into space and was scarcely prepared for the question hoarsely uttered by Masters:

"Thomas Somerby, have you any female correspondents?"

"That is a leading question," answered Tom, "and I ——"

"As you value your life answer me truthfully; or by heaven I'll —— "

Masters went no further. Somerby was thoroughly frightened. He thought Masters had taken leave of his senses, and that he might as well humor him. So he answered quickly:

"Yes, I have one. Advertised for her over the name of 'Agnes Leigh,' last March, when I was out with Miss Harrison; and she's a ripper, too. Now that Dolly and I have made up I must saw off this correspondence somehow. The girl

has a brother who threatens to come up here from Rye Beach to see me, confound him! But I've fixed his flint with a telegram."

Masters tore up and down the room. It was touching to behold his agony. Finally he said:

"Tom, pardon my rudeness just now. Whatever happens we will be friends—we will be true to each other. Won't we?"

"We will," said Somerby, wondering what was coming.

"Give me your hand, Tom—dear, good old friend. We are in a bad box."

And seizing his cousin's extended hand, the elegant Jack Masters hid his face on Somerby's shoulder, and said, in a voice that came within a hair's breadth of petrifying the latter young gentleman where he stood,

"Tom, I am—Miss Charlotte—Heywood, of Chicago!"

A profound silence prevailed for a moment, which was broken at last by Somerby, who observed, in solicitous tones:

"I trust, Jack, that brother Hal is well!"

STAGE COACHING.

STAGE COACHING.

IT was a magnificent afternoon, when, on the occasion of my last visit to the White Mountains, the train which had borne us on through the beautiful Pemigewasset Valley, and over a tract of country unequaled in the world for its quiet grandeur and beauty, halted at Littleton. There was a grand debarking here, and each started for his particular destination by some one of the stage coaches which ply between Littleton and the numerous summer resorts scattered among the mountains. With some twenty others I took passage on the stage destined for the Profile House, and was fortunate enough to secure a seat by the side of the driver. He proved to be a pleasant-mannered old gentleman, with clear gray eyes which twinkled merrily whenever he spoke. He was quite intelligent, withal, and had that indescribable something about him which makes one feel when he encounters men of his kind that if accident had placed them in some higher walk in

life they had within them the elements to adorn that higher plane, even as my friend adorned the box and lent dignity to the coach and four over which he presided. He was decidedly entertaining, and directed my attention to different points in the landscape which had been rendered classic by what Edward Everett, Thomas Starr King, Bayard Taylor and others had written about them. And he informed me with a great deal of impressiveness when alluding to either of the gentlemen that "He was a man that had the sand in him." I had no definite idea of his meaning, but I did not see fit to question him as to the exact definition of the term. There are certain expressions met with quite often which are beyond the ken of the analyst, but which have a significance after all, like Mr. Peggotty's "Well, I'm gormed," and may properly be accepted unquestioned.

When we had driven down to the village of Franconia, my friend pointed out several features of the country which had been described, and gave me an outline of some of the originals of the characters figuring in a series of books called the

"Beechnut Stories," which I remember, and many of my readers will remember, as a very amusing and instructive part of our early reading. After we left Franconia and began to climb the rugged hills which culminate in the mountains beyond, progress was not over rapid. My entertainer, therefore, at the end of a few miles had gone over New Hampshire matters pretty thoroughly, and for some time we rode on in silence. Then, with a view evidently of finding a respectable peg on which to hang some further intelligence, he observed :

"I suppose you hail from Boston way?"

"No. From New York," I answered.

"Now, you don't know how glad I am of that," said he, gleefully. "I say, neighbor, you don't know Judge Proudfit, of Poughkeepsie, do you?"

"Oh ! yes, quite well by reputation, and I have met him personally once or twice in a professional capacity."

"Well, I want to know ! So you know the Judge," he went on. "He's a pretty fair sort of a man, neighbor; a pretty goldarned sight of a

man. He's a man that has got the sand in him, or I'm a cow," and he wagged his head sagely and seemed to be musing.

To all of this I assented, for the gentleman in question is one of the most eminent men in New York. I should have inquired into the relations existing between those two, so far apart in a social sense, and apparently with paths in life running in almost opposite directions; but my companion seemed to wish to change the subject, and so contenting myself with the thought that probably the Judge came to the mountains often, and had been gracious to the old gentleman, I again relapsed into silence. This had the effect of starting him off on a new subject, and he related the following:

"It must be nigh onto thirty years ago that I went down to New York to see an aunt of mine. I was a young man then, and the folks around the house wasn't the sociablest kind of critters I ever see, so I used to look around for something interesting, and among other places I went to was a police court on the same road she lived on, a little further to the west. There's a good deal of hu-

man nature to be seen and studied in a police court. It's a good place for a man to take his boy to, and let the youngster judge for himself whether the use of rum has a good effect on the system. It done me more good them few days I was there than all the temperance lectures I could ever have heard. Fellows brought up there in the morning, nice, respectable looking fellows, too, and charged with being drunk and disorderly the night before. Very likely brought in from behind an ash barrel or something of that sort. The saddest sight of all was the women, some of 'em real bright looking, likely girls, with faces as pretty as angels, but their showy clothes and a good deal of bogus jewelry gave a clue to how they came to fall, and indicated their bad occupation. One morning I remember there was among the prisoners a boy—a bootblack—charged with stealing something or other. He had bright brown eyes, and a way of speaking right out and looking you square in the face. I never believed he was guilty from the way he argued his own case and the way his eyes filled with tears when he told the Judge that he was an

orphan; he had been obliged to commence pretty low down in life, he knew, but he was trying to make an honest living and get some education, hoping some time to be somebody, because his mother told him when she lay sick that she should watch over him and watch his career in life from her home in heaven. When he got to talking this way I just says to myself, 'That boy has got the sand in him,' and as I am a sinner I believe he had. I had hard work to keep from blarting right out like a calf, right before the whole kit of 'em. The Judge looked kinder hazy around the eye when he began to question the boy, and he went on and talked real handsome to him. He said he would look into the matter thoroughly, and if he found there was a mistake, he would provide for him in his own office. And, by grief, that little chap spoke up as smart as a man, and said he, 'That ain't the usual practice of judges, if I am rightly informed, but I appreciate your kindness and shall try to merit your esteem. The charge is as baseless as anything, and I am sure of the place you promise me.' And he was, too, for the day

afore I come away I dropped into the Judge's law office, and there sot that boy reading a calfskin book, with a quill pen behind his ear, and feeling as big as Cuffy. And I heard from that boy after that, and he was admitted to the bar. I always had a good opinion of judges ever since that one there in New York acted so human like, and I'm glad to know that Judge Proudfit is one of the right sort. Them are the only two judges I ever knew, and they both had the sand in them."

I was greatly interested in this little story, homely though it was; there was a quiet earnestness about the speaker which made every word of importance. I expressed myself much pleased that an acquaintance so unpromisingly begun should have terminated so well for the youth, and tried to say something appropriate about judges exercising more discretion in their edicts in cases of juvenile misdemeanor or apparent depravity, with all of which my companion agreed. We had now reached a difficult point in the road, which ran up the mountain-side at an angle, it seemed to me, of about eighty-nine degrees, and for half

an hour neither of us spoke, but as the old gentleman gave the animals their bit as we came into a short space of flat country, he said :

"Somehow a courtroom has always been an attractive spot to me. I never get into Concord but what I have to go up to the courthouse and see what is the matter. About ten years ago I was visiting a sister of mine who lives down in Rhode Island, at a little place called Greenville. There is nothing there but mills and factory people, with a farmer now and then, not very near together. I didn't particularly like around there, but the day before I came away I heard there was going to be a trial of a young man who had married a pretty hard case, for desertion and non-support. It was coming off before a country judge, a hard headed old farmer, living about a mile from our place. I went over there the day it was down for. It was some kind of a State holiday, and the old farmhouse was packed from the front room way back into the kitchen. There was lots of men and more women than you'd think lived within a hundred miles. A young lawyer from Providence

came out to argue the case for the woman, and the boy, who was pretty stuffy, had no lawyer and wouldn't get any. He'd just as soon go to jail, he said, and no one doubted he would have to go, either. There was great excitement while the lawyer was talking, and the women whispered and had a good deal to say among themselves that wasn't complimentary to the girl, but they rather favored her as agin the boy, and the old judge was swallowing every word that the oily chap was saying. After a little, three young fellows with fishing rods and tackle came riding along, and they stopped and came in. They were city bred, you could tell that easy enough ; and there was a sensation as they took their seats in among the women, who made a place for 'em mighty quick. I was attracted to one of them before he had been there long, by the way he watched the lawyer, and a quick way he had of asking questions of the folks sitting near him. Pretty soon he took out a book and wrote down a few words now and then, and when the other chap sat down he jumped up as quick as a cat and made the politest bow to the

Judge, and smiled on everybody in the sweetest way, and said, that as the defendant seemed to be without counsel, he would undertake, with the consent of the court and the approval of his colleague, to defend the youth. He added that though a stranger, he had just obtained permission to practice in the Rhode Island courts, and had set up an office in Providence. He was allowed to argue the case, and then there was a stir. I just rubbed my hands together, and says I, 'Here's a man that has got the sand in him!' and he had. Why, he talked more law and said more things that made us laugh and then cry, than I could tell you in a week. He spoke of the woman first, and said that a woman's reputation was like a fragile vase—the slightest blow ruined it forever. And then he spoke of the blessed influence of a good woman on a man's destiny, and pictured the comfort and holiness of home in such words that I shall never forget it. And then when the women were all crying slyly, he pointed out that in this case the woman was older than the husband, and said there was reason to believe that her path in

life had not always been bounded with rectitude or truth. Instead of bringing a pure and faithful heart to her young and trusting husband, she had married him under false pretenses, taking advantage of his youth and inexperience. She had disgraced his name and made him ashamed to be longer seen in public with her, and finally he had sought to escape by striking out a new path for himself and leaving her to go her way in peace—if she could. Oh, it was beautiful!" said the old man, cracking his whip as we came upon another level space; and though it was quite dark now, I fancied the tears were beaming in his eyes, brought there by his own honest enthusiasm.

"That young man talked," he continued, "for an hour; and he might have talked for twenty-four, and no one would get tired. Before he had spoken fifteen minutes the old Judge raised his spectacles up onto his forehead, and putting his chin in his hands, he never took his eyes off of him until he sat down. And when he did sit down there was a stillness all over that great house like that in a meeting-house when the minister spreads out his

arms and says, 'Now may the grace of our Lord and Saviour be with you all!' I could hardly keep in my chair till the old Judge got up, and then I arose with him. He wasn't a man of many words. He very deliberately said: 'In my opinion the indictment's squashed. The court has adjourned.' I couldn't hold in any longer; I yelled right out, 'Judge, you've got the sand in you, and no joking;' and that was the opinion of everybody. As for the young man, why, sir, they'd carried him on their shoulders if he'd let 'em, they were so glad he popped in as he did. They cheered him and shook hands with him, and he laughed and shook hands back, and everybody was as happy as kittens. I stood back watching his handsome face and figure, and thinking all the time I had seen him before, till he started to go out the door, and then, as I wasn't going to lose my shake, I started after him. He was just trotting out of the yard as I overtook him trying to catch up with his friends, who had gone on a little ahead to unhitch the horse. I reached out my hand to him, and told him how glad I was he called around, and then all

of a sudden he gave me a look, and I spoke right out, and said I,

" 'Young man, I've seen you before somewhere's.' "

" 'Well, I don't know,' says he, as kind and gentlemanly as if I'd been the Governor of the State, 'I am from New York. Have you been there lately?' "

" 'Not in a good many years. You must have been a boy when I was there, and a pretty small boy, too.' "

" 'Well, if I was a very small boy, I was a bootblack. Who knows but I shined 'em up for you twenty good years ago?' and he laughed again, and said he was quite proud to say that at an early age he had acquired a tolerable acquaintance with the difference between calfskin and cowhide by actual experience with both. I couldn't hardly catch my breath, I was so eager, but I choked down my heart that was all the time trying to crowd up into my mouth, and says I, 'Your name a'n't Henry Proudfit?' and before I knew it he said it was; and then we shook hands again and

again, and talked things over till his friends got so impatient he had to go, though he didn't want to. Well, well, welly! he's a judge now, God bless him, and I'm going to Poughkeepsie some day and see him. The sand in that man," he concluded impressively, "would sink a ship."

For a quarter of an hour we rode on in silence. No comment of mine could have added a touch to the symmetry of the story; the wrong word would surely have jarred upon the old man's mind and hurt his feelings. I knew this, and therefore held my peace. But as we reached the summit of the last hill-top and saw at our feet the brilliantly lighted Profile House, its great white surface standing out against the inky background formed by Moun t Lafayette in most dazzling relief, I essayed to re-open the conversation on a new topic as we dashed along, and observed that I supposed there were a good many newspaper correspondents in the vicinity this season.

"Oh! yes," said he, "lots of 'em every season, and your speaking about 'em puts me in mind. Some of 'em have got the sand in 'em, but not

many. There was one chap up here two summers ago," and here he broke out laughing till his hearty peals reverberated again and again among the ledges through which the road was cut. "He was up here," he continued, "two seasons ago. I didn't see him to know him, but I believe he came over the mountain from the Crawford House and then rode over to Littleton with me. His name was Tom—Tom Somerset—Somerby. Tom Somerby, that's the fellow. Well, I read a piece of his in the New York *Commercial Advertiser* about this country, and if he hasn't got the longest gaspipe in him of any man I ever see, then I don't know a whip-socket from an ear of green corn."

The road at about this point was very rocky, and the coach made a hideous noise, so I could not well discover my identity. Afterward I might have done so, but after all I am a modest man ; I don't care to have it bruited about who I am, when for the nonce I forget my proud eminence in life and am traveling incognito. It was for this reason, and for no other, I assure you, that I refrained from pressing my card on the old gentleman at parting.

OLD GEORGE WENTWORTH.

OLD GEORGE WENTWORTH.

IN the year of our Lord 1867 there came to work in the Western Union Telegraph Office at No. 145 Broadway a thin, prematurely old and gray young man of not more than twenty-six years. No one seemed to know anything about him, and he soon dropped into our ranks, and came and went day after day without eliciting much interest on the part of those around him. He was very quiet, and seldom spoke unless addressed, but then in a low and sweetly musical voice. That he was intelligent and well educated everybody conceded, but he manifested no disposition to mix with the general throng; and thus it happened that the general throng, without thinking much about it, came to speak of him with more respect than the appellation given him would imply as "Old George Wentworth," and to leave him pretty much to himself. He sat right across the aisle from me, and I often studied his sad though pleasant face, and ere long put his name down in my mind

with those of some other men I had met, and whom I may briefly describe by stating that they were men with histories. Yes, I was moderately sure that George Wentworth had a history, and I longed to know what it was, and give him my young and boyish friendship with my whole heart. But months passed, and we knew no more of our associate then we did when he came, except that he was a magnificent operator, and that he was as sweet as a day in June, though as sad, as I have indicated, as the melancholy and sighing days of the later autumn. His voice and manner always reminded me of the falling of the hectic October leaves, the surging of the autumn wind through leafless branches. But the glorious sunbeams were always resting on his head, making sweet and lovable his life and character.

One night we had a severe sleet storm, and hardly a wire was left intact in any direction. The full force had been ordered on duty waiting for the lines to come "O. K.," and sat about in little knots, telling stories and speculating on the chances of being kept on duty until morning.

For a time I formed one of a little company, but not being particulary interested in the topic of discussion, and seeing George Wentworth sitting alone, I approached him. After a short exchange of commonplaces, I asked, abruptly:

"Are you a married man, Mr. Wentworth?"

The reply came slowly: "No."

If that little monosyllable had been kept on ice for a century it could not have been colder. I saw that I had been imprudent, that I had awkwardly touched a chord in the man's heart that was sacred. I was very sorry, and being very young and inexperienced in hiding my emotions, I made a failure of it. The tears came into my eyes, my lip trembled, and I felt wretched. He saw the state of things at a glance, and said, kindly:

"I beg your pardon, Tom, I didn't mean to be rude, but I had just been thinking of events scarcely six years old, but such bitter, hopeless memories that it seems as if I had lived a thousand years since the page on which they are written was turned down in the book of Fate—turned down forever."

He paused, and I said nothing. "I have never spoken of these things," he continued, "but I think I was something like you at twenty; how sadly I have changed since then!"

He stopped again, and then continued: "I don't mind telling you my story, if you would care to hear it;" and as I eagerly answered, "Do tell me," he resumed: "It is a sad story, my little friend, it concerns a woman. Some say hearts do not break; others, that women's hearts do sometimes, but that a man's is tough, and can bear disaster to the affections without material injury. May be it is true, generally speaking, but there are exceptions—the exceptions, I suppose," he said, musingly, "that philosophers would tell you prove the rule. You see me to-day old and prematurely gray. I have never been a dissipated man. I inherited a fine constitution from my father. I have lived regularly and have never suffered from disease, but I am as you see me, nevertheless. Do you ask me if I am heart-broken? I cannot say that, but I have mourned over dead and buried hopes for five years, and God's beautiful world will

never look so fair and sweet again to me as the hour when I close my eyes upon it forever."

He moved slightly in his chair, and said, as if studying on the matter, "It looks like a case of broken heart, doesn't it?"

Then he was silent for several minutes, but when he spoke again his voice had changed and he proceeded more cheerfully than I had ever heard him speak before:

"Six years ago last August I was employed in an Eastern city. I worked the New York wire, and one day while I was sending, an office boy came up and said: 'Mr. Wentworth, there's a lady outside as wants to see yer.' I cleared my hook, asked New York to wait a second, and went out into the vestibule of the office. A vision of loveliness, such as I had never seen until then, stood before me. She was an entire stranger to me, but we were soon chatting gaily, nevertheless, for she had said in the meantime: 'I am Helen Banks, from Saybrook, and, as I was passing through here, on my way to Rockville, where I am to take the office, I thought it not improper that I should

call and renew, in *propria persona*, the acquaintance we had formed by wire.'

"I have burdened you by inference with one exploded theory, so don't mind another," he continued; "I fell in love at first sight. She was a lovely creature, small of stature, bright, intelligent, modest, enchanting, and she appeared to me as suddenly and unexpectedly as Diana appeared to Endymion. How readily I accepted Endymion's *rôle*, and with what alacrity I awoke from my sleep of every-day life to a new life of love and bliss, I need not tell you. She stayed only a few minutes, and at parting she said gaily:

"'I expect to be intensely lonesome down at Rockville, and that my only recreation will be that derived from listening to the birds and to your musical sending. Think of me sometimes, and when the wire is idle say a word to poor me, won't you?' she went on, half jocosely, half in earnest. 'And,' she concluded, 'when you are too busy to bid a body good day, please imagine that

> Pretty and pale and tired
> She sits, in her stiff-backed chair,
> While the blazing summer sun
> Shines on her soft brown hair,'

and all the rest of it. Good-by!' and she was gone.

"How dark and dismal the old office looked as I resumed my duties. The sunbeams which in my imagination nestled in her hair and played around the dimples in her cheeks, lending a new and genial luster to the office, and blessing every nook and corner in the dim old room like a visible benediction, went out with her. I was very thoughtful and preoccupied that afternoon, and felt that I could afford to smile at my companions who sought to tease me by asking if that was the young lady who inquired over the wire so often if Mr. Wentworth was in. Well, time passed on, and what with chatting on the wire, and corresponding by mail, we finally reached the period in our acquaintance when I dared to offer myself in marriage. A letter was the medium of my proposal—I had not courage to make a personal appeal."

He paused and drummed on the desk with his fingers for a little time and then said :

"I waited patiently three days for an answer,

but none came. Then I waited a week, a month, and then she resigned and went home. I dared not make any inquiry of her meantime, though I did write confidentially to the postmaster at Rockville, and learned that he had himself delivered the letter into her hands. I saw how it was, she could not accept me and was too kind to tell me so. I went into the army when the war broke out, but returned home on a furlough in 1863. I learned that Helen had married her cousin a few months before and had removed to Iowa. I was resolved to make the best of it and be a man. You see how well I have succeeded," he said, smiling sadly. "Just before my furlough was out I took up a copy of a morning paper published in the city where I had been formerly employed and started on seeing my own name.

"At first I thought I had been accidentally included in a list of killed and wounded. I hastily turned the paper to read the heading, and my heart sank within me. Through hot, blinding tears, which I could not stay, I read the sad, sad story that made me what I am. A post-office clerk

had been arrested for robbing the mail ; in his room were found unendorsed, and therefore useless checks, 'and among other things,' the account said : 'Personal letters to the following named addresses.' Then followed a list of a hundred or more names, among which was mine. I took the first train to ———, and applying at police headquarters, obtained my letter. It was as I had feared ; it was her letter accepting me as her husband. I crushed it in my hands, and crying : 'O God, too late, too late !' fell swooning on the floor. A few weeks later I went back to my post in the army. My comrades said I was the bravest man they had ever seen. I rushed into the thickest of the fight, and feared nothing. I courted an honorable death ; but bullets whistled by me, shells burst by my side, killing men by dozens. The fever broke out in our regiment and fifty men died in one week, but I lived on. Promotion followed promotion, and at last, to please my mother, I resigned my commission, stayed at home a month, and finally promised to keep out of the army on condition that I should resume work at my old

business wherever I could find it. Since then I have been in Canada, and finally drifted to New York to be nearer home. Now, Tom, let me tell you here that— "

"Mr. Wentworth, we have got one wire up to Washington ; answer him for a *Sun* special, please," called out Night Manager Marks from the switch, and the story was ended.

The thread thus broken was never taken up again, and by some indefinable understanding between us, I guarded Wentworth's secret as jealously as if it were I who had loved and lost, and henceforward neither of us mentioned it.

I left New York soon after this, and never saw George Wentworth again until I stood one August day two years later in a small Connecticut town, and looked down upon all that was mortal of him as he lay in his coffin. His sweet face was as natural as in life, and scarcely any paler. His mother stood by and reverently kissed his brow again and again, while the sturdy frame of his grand old father trembled like a reed shaken in the wind as he gazed fondly and tearfully upon

the dead. There were not many particulars of his death to be obtained. It was obvious that no one excepting the old pastor knew of his love and the suffering he had undergone.

"He came home," said his mother, "about a month ago, looking no worse than usual, but he shortly began to fail perceptibly day by day. The doctor came and prescribed a change of air, but George said he would be better soon, and begged to remain quietly where he was. One afternoon he walked out under the elms and laid down in the hammock. At six o'clock I went out and asked him to return to the house. He said: 'Not yet, mother. It is delightful here, the breeze refreshes me, and I feel perfectly easy and content. I will remain where I am—thank you—and watch the sun go down.' When the sun had set I went out again, but," she added, in a breaking, though sweetly musical voice, like George's, "my boy had gone to rest with the sun, whose downward course he watched."

The minister came and preached the customary sermon, ranking the dead man with

"Men whose lives glide on like rivers that water the woodlands,
Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven;"

the modest cortege moved away, and George Wentworth was laid to rest in a solitary grave beneath the murmuring pines on a neighboring hillside. This was done at his request, made to the old preacher, whom he also acquainted with his story when he felt that the end was near. Not being a relative, I did not go to the grave, and as I prepared to leave the house I met a sweet, sad faced woman, whom I had noticed approach and gaze long and tenderly upon the form of my departed friend, and then retire to a remote corner of the room weeping painfully. Some one said she was a stranger, others that she was some woman living in the village, and still others said that she was a relative. But I knew she was not the latter, else she would have been provided with a carriage. We left the house together, and as we walked down the neat gravel path, I said:

"This is a very pretty village. Do you live here?"

"No, sir," she replied, "I live many, many miles from here. Mr. Wentworth was an old friend of mine, and my husband insisted that I should come to his funeral."

"You live in Iowa, perhaps," said I gently. Our eyes met for a moment, and we understood each other.

"You are married, I believe—happily so, I trust," I ventured, after a moment.

"My husband is very kind," she replied. "I am quite content, thank you. We have two children."

"I suppose you know the whole story," I added, after a pause, "the stolen letter, his suffering and his unaltered love."

"Yes, sir, I know it all now, Mr. Somerby," she said, weeping. "The good parson who preached the funeral sermon to-day wrote me the sad story a few weeks ago. It was he, too, who telegraphed George's death, and influenced his parents, without disclosing his motive, to defer the funeral until now. I arrived only at noon to-day. Oh! sir," she continued, "I try to think it is all for the best.

I pray to Heaven to help me to be true and good to my kind and affectionate husband, and to make me worthy of my pure and guileless little ones; but I sometimes fear that I have only a shattered heart left to love them with."

We shook hands and separated, probably forever. I went back to my telegraphing, and she back to Iowa, her husband and little ones, and her great sorrow. And that ends the story, unless I add an odd fancy of my own.

Sometimes when the house is hushed and midnight draws near, I sit and smoke and dream. Watching the clouds as they curl upward from my cigar, or peering through the smoke rings I blow forth, I see hopes and joys that have passed me by, which, as they vanish in the haze, leave my cheeks wet. And as I sit and muse anon, my mind flits back to a quiet rustic village, and I hear the winds softly sighing through the pines above a solitary grave on a hill-side. Looking west, I see a sweet, sad-faced matron sitting beneath a cottage portico, and happy, gleeful children are about her. Then I listen

to the pines again, and I fancy I hear them whisper,

> "Pretty and pale and tired
> She sits in her stiff backed chair,
> While the blazing summer sun
> Shines on her soft brown hair;"

and as I turn once more I see her yet again—waiting, waiting, waiting.

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